

# Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible  
Reading ■ Giving Time, Talents & Re-  
sources ■ Spiritual Friendships ■ Service  
In & Beyond the Church

January 6, 2019

## Day 1: Isaiah 59

**And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord.**

The servant (Isaiah 49:6) is the “he” above. The servant is not the conqueror but the one who buys back those who repent (turn back) of their former sin. The speech is given to those who have returned to let them know that just moving back to Judah is not sufficient (though necessary) for their redemption. They must turn away from their former transgression of idolatry. They must worship God and God alone. Zion refers to both Jerusalem and the Temple (the place where God dwells).

**Question:** Who is referred to by the word Jacob and what is apostasy?

**Challenge:** Look at your date book, your checkbook, and your credit card receipts - do your activities show that you worship the creature instead of the creator?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 59

## Day 2: Isaiah 59:21

**And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you, and my words that I have put in your mouth, shall not depart out of your mouth, or out of the mouths of your children, or out of the mouths of your children's children, says the Lord, from now on and forever.**

God demands our obedience and our worship. Both of these demands are made for our benefit. The covenant is the promise from God and it describes the future if the people will continue in the worship of God and follow God's commands. Human beings are prone to worship something; if we do not worship the one God then we will worship something else. If we worship something else then we will not follow God's commands, which will lead us away from the Promised Land. Notice the long term aspect of this promise - to the generations to follow. We, by following God's commands, ensure redemption for our children.

**Question:** Would God's word get passed on if we decided to skip teaching for a generation? Who has the responsibility for this teaching?

**Challenge:** How do you help make sure that the words God has given get passed down from generation to generation?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 58

## Day 3: Isaiah 60:1

**Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.**

Beginning with chapter 60 we see a real change in the prophet's tone. In much of Isaiah darkness has been the motif most often used. Whenever Isaiah speaks of the servant he uses the image of light. In Genesis 1, light brings order and life to the world. The glory of God is not seen in a great victory in a battle, but in the faithfulness of God's people.

**Question:** What is the significance of the word “arise” in the above verse?

**Challenge:** Think about the day. When is your best time - morning, afternoon, midday, evening, twilight or night? After deciding, spend some prayer time at that time of day.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61

## Day 4: Isaiah 60:2-3

**For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.**

Isaiah is writing on two levels. One is that the brightness of God's light (reflected from Zion) is so bright that the rest of the world seems to be in darkness. They have no choice but to come to “the brightness of your dawn.” The other level is the ignorance that comes from not being able to see the world correctly. When the light of God comes then we shall see what is real in terms of relationships. When we see clearly we can correct our relationship with God, family and community.

**Question:** What kind of light do you think the author has in mind?

**Challenge:** Think up a prayer you can use to help you reflect the light of God in your actions.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 62

## Day 5: Isaiah 60:4-5

**Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.**

Isaiah challenges us to hope. Isaiah calls us to risk feeling our hopes will be dashed. Isaiah promises us that God is faithful and will deliver us and give us abundant life. Furthermore, God will give us a future. The return of the children meant the future had come back to Jerusalem. Their hope for a future had been dashed when the Babylonians conquered them three generations earlier. I believe that Isaiah would tell us today to look around and see how our faithfulness to God shows us that we have a future for ourselves and for our families. God's grace is stronger than any economic downturn ever experienced.

**Question:** Why is the wealth of nations coming to Jerusalem?

**Challenge:** Take a look at your life and see what “wealth” you have been given.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 65:17-25

## Day 6: Isaiah 60:6

**A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall proclaim the praise of the Lord.**

Isaiah wrote as God commanded, to a people that had come back to Jerusalem. They had returned and so were close to experiencing God's redemption. God had redeemed them but they had not as yet fully accepted that redemption. Isaiah asks them to open the gift to see what is inside and to not be afraid to use the gift of love. Today we read these words written centuries ago and they ring true to our experience. There is a future for our families and God tells us that we will see enough prosperity. We will see that prosperity does not have to come from being selfish and greedy.

**Question:** Why is the praise of the Lord to accompany an offering?

**Challenge:** Think about your offerings (time, talent and money). Do your offerings praise God?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 66:1-16

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In & Beyond the Church

January 13, 2019

## Day 1: Luke 3:15

***The people were waiting expectantly and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.***

It is true today as it was in the first century that people are looking for signs of hope. We think that after 2,000 years everybody knows the Christian message (even if they do not believe it) and so knows where to look for help in life. Every generation needs to hear the Good News. Though it is in a different manner, we, like John the Baptist, are signs of hope for the next generation. We carry in ourselves the image of Christ.

**Question:** Are you good at waiting? Why or why not?

**Challenge:** Can you name three to five people that really seem Christ-like? Remember, they need not be perfect, for only God is perfect.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 52:7-12

## Day 2: Luke 3:16

***John answered them all, "I baptize you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.***

John knew his mission and did not try to be more or less than he was. John called people to repent, to look at their lives and notice that their relationship to God was faulty. He pointed not only to Jesus, who was coming, but he was pointing them to how they could know that God was with them always. The Holy Spirit is that presence of God that is with us.

**Question:** Why do you think we use water in baptism today?

**Challenge:** How would you describe to someone "baptism with the Holy Spirit?"

**Scripture:** Luke 7:19-35

## Day 3: Luke 3:17

***His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."***

The words of John the Baptist sound hard to our ears. What he is saying is: it is God who will do the judging, not people. My life is not in the hands nor am I at the mercy of an individual or group. My life is in the hands of God and it is God's mercy that I can depend on. No king or ruler will decide my eternity, only God. John wants to make it clear that God is at work in our salvation, not another agency nor our own self.

**Question:** Can you tell good vegetables and fruits from bad ones? How do you do it?

**Challenge:** Think of some people that might be labeled "chaff." Now write down why they are chaff.

**Scripture:** Acts 5:26-42

## Day 4: Luke 3:18

***And with many other words John exhorted the people and preached the good news to them.***

The Good News that John preached was that the promises God made to the ancestors are valid even though it does not feel or seem like it. It is like our relationship to God; at times we do not feel close to God and even wonder if we have been separated from Him. Yet our relationship to God does not depend on how we feel about it but on the objective fact of Christ rising from the dead and our acceptance of Him as Lord.

**Question:** Do you recall a sermon that was very meaningful to you?

**Challenge:** Pick three people that you know and figure out what "good news" they need to hear.

**Scripture:** Isaiah 61:1-3

## Day 5: Luke 3:21

***When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too. And as he was praying, heaven was opened***

In a dramatic moment Jesus comes to be baptized. His baptism is the beginning of his public ministry. It is in a sense His ordination by God to go teach, heal and preach. By our baptism we too are ordained to this ministry of teaching, healing and preaching.

**Question:** Do you know when you were baptized and where? If not, find out.

**Challenge:** Think back to a time when you felt God listening to you. What was taking place?

**Scripture:** Romans 10:12-21

## Day 6: Luke 3:22-23

***and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry.***

In as dramatic a scene as the baptism, an appearance from God takes place. It is the beginning of Jesus' public ministry but more importantly it is the clearest statement of who Jesus really is. He is not a prophet or teacher but God incarnate - in human form. It is this truth we seek to proclaim to the world.

**Question:** Has someone ever told you that they are "well pleased" with you? Who?

**Challenge:** What do you think the difference is between Jesus being a teacher or prophet, and the Son of God?

**Scripture:** Matthew 4:23-25

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January 20, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 1:1

***In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach***

Luke is the author of Acts. Acts is the second volume of a two volume work and was written at the same time. Theophilus is believed to be an actual person but the book is intended for a congregation. Acts will demonstrate how the Church at the time of this writing (30-40 years after the Resurrection) is a direct outgrowth of Jesus' ministry.

**Question:** What is your favorite multi-volume book?

**Challenge:** Write down on a piece of paper all you recall from Jesus' life in the order you think it happened.

**Scripture:** Luke 5:1-26

## Day 2: Acts 1:2

***until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.***

Luke-Acts is about Jesus and His Church and is written to show how God came in human form and left the Spirit to continue God's presence on earth. Luke is very definite about Jesus being taken up to heaven and that the Holy Spirit remains with the disciples. During Jesus' ministry there were more than 12 Disciples but the disciples referred to here are to be witnesses to the resurrection. By our acceptance of Christ as Lord **we** become witnesses to the resurrection. Being a witness is different than giving an opinion. A witness tells accurately what they saw or heard without attaching meaning to the event.

**Question:** Have you ever been a witness to something and needed to tell what you saw or heard? If so what was it like?

**Challenge:** If someone asked you to explain the Holy Spirit, what would you say?

**Scripture:** Luke 26:36-49

## Day 3: Acts 1:3

***After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.***

Jesus appeared to the disciples a number of times and in different places so that they could truly believe that he rose from the dead. The disciples were to begin a new way of living and relating to God and they needed to be absolutely sure that God was with them in life and in death. Some of the first disciples lost their lives for their belief. They had to know it was worth dying for.

**Question:** What would convince you that Jesus was raised from the dead?

**Challenge:** If you wanted to give one piece of wisdom to someone what would it be?

**Scripture:** Luke 24:13-25

## Day 4: Acts 1:4

***On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.***

The process of serving in God's name begins first with belief in the mission. Second, knowledge about what that mission is all about. Third, a sign from God that the Spirit is directing us to begin. We can do nothing without the Spirit of God leading us and empowering us. It may take us days, weeks, months, to prepare for service but when God is ready for us to begin, we will be sent forth.

**Question:** How did you decide (if you have already) to be in the job you are in?

**Challenge:** Think back over your life to see when God has directed you in one direction or another.

**Scripture:** Luke 24:35-53

## Day 5: Acts 1:5

***For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."***

John the Baptist prepared people for the coming of Christ by having them repent of their sin. This put them in a state of mind so that they could hear the Good News. As the water of Baptism flows over us, so the Spirit of God will flow over us and it will flow into us. The Spirit gives us the assurance of salvation. The water cleanses us and the Spirit gives us life.

**Question:** What do you know about your baptism?

**Challenge:** Do a little research to find out the day, time, place, and who came to your baptism.

**Scripture:** Luke 3:15-20

## Day 6: Acts 1:6

***So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

This is a request for the Kingdom of God to come. We know that the time of the Kingdom is in God's hands but we still want that time to come now. Jesus in His physical leaving and sending of the Spirit is telling us that the Kingdom is still here in part so that we can feel its benefits, but that some day it will come in fullness. Until that day we have the Church to be the physical manifestation of Christ on earth - the body of Christ.

**Question:** Do you like the image of the Church as being the body of Christ?

**Challenge:** How do you think the world would be different if the Church was not here?

**Scripture:** Mark 16:14-20

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January 27, 2019

## Day 1: Acts 1:6

***So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"***

This question is on the minds of Christians when they meet together for worship. In the Lord's Prayer we always ask for the Kingdom to come. We know that it will come in God's time but we still want that time of peace for all to come now. When we find ourselves wishing for the time of peace to come now, it is usually in a time of distress and it is a prayer from the heart.

**Question:** What is the longest you had to wish for something?

**Challenge:** Pray the Lord's Prayer very slowly. Stop at each word and think about what it means.

**Scripture:** II Samuel 7:1-17

## Day 2: Acts 1:7

***He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority."***

The hardest words in the English language (or any language) are "have patience." We are not disposed to wait for much of anything. If what we are waiting for is something really good then our patience is even less. Yet, if we knew the answer to the question "when," we might just sit around without doing anything. Our patience should be active waiting. We wait for God to tell us what to do but the waiting is preparing us for when we are called to act.

**Question:** Do you know when you were born? The date, time, day of the week, and place?

**Challenge:** What do you think of the concept of "active waiting" and how would you explain it?

**Scripture:** Isaiah 41:1-9

## Day 3: Acts 1:8

***But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."***

There is power that comes from the sun or a waterfall. There is power from the atom or another source of energy. There is power that comes from an idea or belief. Yet none of these or any other power we could mention was involved in the creation of the world. The Holy Spirit is a unique power source because it has the ability to give life. Jesus does not want us to go forth with the message of the Gospel until we are powerful.

**Question:** What is the most powerful thing in the world?

**Challenge:** Find a map so that you can identify Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

**Scripture:** I Thessalonians 1:1-10

## Day 4: Acts 1:9

***After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.***

Jesus spent 40 days after the Resurrection visiting the disciples at various times. He waited to ascend because the disciples had to be firm in their belief that He overcame death. The shock of His death was great and they might have thought the Resurrection was just wishful thinking or their imagination. Jesus did eventually leave them because He knew that they could carry on His mission. Jesus has confidence in us today to carry out His mission of teaching, healing and preaching. In short, to be the light to the world.

**Question:** What was the hardest goodbye you ever had to make?

**Challenge:** How can you tell someone that you trust them enough to leave them alone?

**Scripture:** Luke 24:36-53

## Day 5: Acts 1:10-11

***They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."***

The start of a wedding is about the hardest part of the service. Certain beginnings are such that there is no going back so we are reluctant to start even if we want to go on the journey. We are afraid of beginnings that are endings because we have to move into new territory. We do not know the path so we can only keep going if we are assured that A) God is with us and B) God is in the future waiting for us.

**Question:** What is the strangest thing you have ever seen in the sky?

**Challenge:** What do you think about the concept of the return of Jesus?

**Scripture:** I Thessalonians 4:13-18

## Day 6: Acts 1:13-14

***When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.***

Prayer is a critical first step before we make any decisions. The disciples and the other women all gathered in the upper room before they went about their next move. They believed that God would show them what their next move should be. God did not disappoint them. God did show them what to do next and with each move thereafter. They never felt that Jesus was far off but rather they could sense his presence in their midst.

**Question:** Do you pray before making an important decision?

**Challenge:** If you came into the room where all these early followers were, what three questions would you ask them?

**Scripture:** Luke 6:1-49