

Marks

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

of Discipleship

April 5, 2020

Day 1: Mark 11:1-2

When they were approaching Jerusalem, at Beth phage and Bethany, near the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples and said to them, 'Go into the village ahead of you, and immediately as you enter it, you will find tied there a colt that has never been ridden; untie it and bring it.'

The Mount of Olives is a short distance from the entrance to the Temple Mount, in Jerusalem. Bethany is on the west side of the hill called the Mount of Olives. Beth phage is a very small village (really a collection of houses) a Sabbath's day journey (the distance a person was allowed to walk on the Sabbath) to the temple court. It is about a mile walk in total. It is Jesus' intention to dramatize who He is. He was preparing a living parable.

Question: Have you ever been in a parade? Would you rather be in one or watch one?

Challenge: Take a walk this week of at least a mile. Do this each day and while you walk think about your life to date.

Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11

Day 2: Mark 11:3

'If anyone says to you, "Why are you doing this?" just say this, "The Lord needs it and will send it back here immediately."

The reason they were willing to give up the colt so quickly is found in the statement "the Lord" has need of it. This is not Jesus' first trip to this area. In fact He has been here a number of times. He is well known by the people in the villages on the Mount of Olives. They knew He was Lord so the title the disciples used told the person with the colt that God was calling them to give up something valuable for the kingdom. We never know when God will call upon us to give up something important for the kingdom.

Question: How do you like horseback riding?

Challenge: When have you felt "someone" saying to you, the Lord has need of it?

Scripture: John 12:9-19

Day 3: Mark 11:4-6

They went away and found a colt tied near a door, outside in the street. As they were untying it, some of the bystanders said to them, 'What are you doing, untying the colt?' They told them what Jesus had said; and they allowed them to take it.

This sounds like a repeat of the verse above. The difference is that in verse 3 Jesus is telling what the disciples can expect, but in verse 4 the disciples are experiencing the truth of what Jesus told them. We have heard the good news of God's love but until we accept it and experience that sense of forgiveness that comes from God, it is just information. It does not become personal until we experience it. This is why we must help people experience the love of God, that love we have already experienced. We cannot preach the word until we have believed it ourselves.

Question: What are the three most valuable things that you have?

Challenge: What would it mean for you to give your best or most valuable things you have to God?

Scripture: Zachariah 9:9-10, Isaiah 2:1-4, Micah 4:1-3

Day 4: Mark 11:7-8

Then they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks on it; and he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, and others spread leafy branches that they had cut in the fields.

Jesus picks a colt to make His entry because he wanted to place emphasis on the fact that His kingdom is of a different nature. He comes not as a conquering hero on a war horse, but as the king of peace. He brings a kingdom that has hope for humanity and comes from God. Spreading cloaks and waving branches was a way to honor someone.

Question: Today, how do we show respect for someone in a parade?

Challenge: If God will bring about the kingdom when God wants to, why should we work to bring it about?

Scripture: Nehemiah 8:10-18

Day 5: Mark 11:9

Then those who went ahead and those who followed were shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord!'

One of the things the crowd did for Jesus was to acknowledge Him as Lord. In effect they were saying that He was the greatest. This kind of affirmation was needed by Jesus so he could go through the days to come. In the days to come some of the same people would call for his death. For now the crowd recognized Jesus as the King and was willing to proclaim it for all to hear.

Question: What good news have you shared this week?

Challenge: List five things about yourself that are outstanding.

Scripture: Mark 14:1-31

Day 6: Mark 11:10

Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!'

The hope of the people in Judah at this time was that God would now establish the new kingdom on earth. They believed that God loved them and they believed that God, the creator and covenant God, would finally bring them back from exile. They did not know exactly how this would happen and they especially did not know when. They knew it would be soon but they did not know how soon. There were plenty of opinions as to how, when and what they should do to prepare. All of these opinions contributed to the leaders not recognizing Jesus as the one they waited for and that the time of redemption was now. Palm Sunday was a brief time when both Jesus and the crowd experienced and expressed the joy of God's promise fulfilled. They hailed and acknowledged Jesus as Lord.

Question: How do you think the crowd knew to hail Jesus as king?

Challenge: Easter is coming in two days. Write down how you have experienced the resurrection.

Scripture: Mark 14:32-72

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

April 12, 2020

Day 1: Luke 24:1

But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared.

The women who came to the tomb were doing what they ordinarily would have done on the same day a person died. They could not go to the tomb because of the Sabbath and their own need to grieve on Saturday. It was very hard for them to follow through with the proper rituals for the dead. They came at sunrise - the most hopeful part of the day.

Question: What do you consider to be the "first day of the week?" Why?

Challenge: What do you think is a healthy time to have a service for someone after they have died? Why?

Scripture: 2 Samuel 12:15-25

Day 2: Luke 24:2-3

They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body.

The tomb looked like a cave with a small entrance. The entrance would be about three feet high and 4-5 feet wide. A large circular stone was placed in front of the entrance to keep out animals and other intruders. This stone was rolled along a track dug for it. The stone was heavy and it usually took a couple of strong people to roll it out of the way. It was a great shock not to find the body where they had placed it two days earlier. They thought that someone had taken the body of Jesus.

Question: What kind of marker would you like on your grave?

Challenge: If we believe in a Resurrection, why do we have funerals?

Scripture: Genesis 23:3-15

Day 3: Luke 24:4-5

While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.

The appearance of the men in white clothes reminds us of the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2-4). The women knew the men in white were messengers from God but they were too afraid to look at the them. The women could not believe the news the men brought at first, because they were hurt so badly by Jesus' death. They were afraid to believe and open themselves up to being hurt again.

Question: Do you recall when someone you loved told you they did not care for you any more?

Challenge: What advice could you give someone to help them get over the loss of a loved one?

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 7:5-11

Day 4: Luke 24:6-9

Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again." Then they remembered his words, and returning from the tomb, they told all this to the eleven and to all the rest.

The men in white calmed the fears of the women by reminding them of what Jesus said in the past. Now the women could understand just what Jesus had said in the past. When the women realized that nobody had taken the body, but that Jesus rose from the dead as He said He would, their first response was to tell others.

Question: When were you so excited you ran to tell someone about what happened?

Challenge: How do you deal with fear?

Scripture: Matthew 10:16-42

Day 5: Luke 24:10-11

Now it was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them who told this to the apostles. But these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.

In their culture women did not teach or preach or take a leading role in public meetings, yet the first witnesses to the resurrection (the women) told others about what they had seen. They did not see themselves as teaching or preaching but simply telling what they had experienced. Today that is what God wants us to do, simply tell others what we have experienced. It would be a shame if we missed a blessing because the source of the blessing seemed too young or too old or in a form we do not expect.

Question: When did you tell somebody something and they did not believe you?

Challenge: Is there anything women are not allowed to do in our culture but men are?

Scripture: Exodus 35:20-29, Acts 16:13-16

Day 6: Luke 24:12

But Peter got up and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; then he went home, amazed at what had happened.

Peter's impulsiveness often got him in trouble but we see that he is the one that ran to the tomb. This is the kind of faith we need to exhibit - to run to Jesus without over thinking. The women got over their surprise sooner than Peter. On becoming a Christian, some will run out and begin to tell others, some will sit for a bit and think, some will do quiet things, and some will do great things. God allows each of us the time we need to internalize what happened to us and to pick a response that fits our nature.

Question: When was the last time you did something without thinking?

Challenge: Think about how you witnessed to your faith when you first believed and how you witness now.

Scripture: Acts 1:6-11, Matthew 28:16-20

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

April 19, 2020

Day 1: Luke 24:13-14

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened.

What we call Sunday, the early Christians called “first day.” It is the beginning of the week. These two were not part of the Twelve, but part of a group of extended followers. They had been in Jerusalem for Passover and were returning home. Their discussion of the events that just happened was helping to fix in their own minds just what did happen. They were having trouble believing all that took place.

Question: What are three things that you know are true but you have a hard time believing?

Challenge: What is the hardest thing about the Christian faith for you to believe?

Scripture: I Corinthians 1:17-21

Day 2: Luke 24:15-18

As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

Jesus, not recognized by the two, asks them to describe what had happened. Their response to his question was terse and impolite. It was their sadness over the way Jesus was treated and his eventual death that prevented them from seeing who was talking to them.

Question: If you did not have your sight, how would you recognize a friend?

Challenge: If you did not have your sight or hearing, how would you recognize that someone was friendly?

Scripture: Acts 1:15-26

Day 3: Luke 24:19-24

“What things?” he asked. “About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.”

As the two recall the events of the Passion we see the reason for their sadness. They are afraid to believe that Jesus lives. They believed that no one could live through what happened to Jesus. It was not just the person of Jesus that they grieved for but also the loss of the future they thought was coming. They had an idea of how Jesus would lead them to freedom and that idea did not include His death and Resurrection. God acts in unusual ways to bring hope and life to God’s creation.

Question: What images are images of hope for you?

Challenge: Think of a loss you were able to overcome. How did you do it? What internal resources enabled you to move through the loss?

Scripture: Luke 23:1-56

Day 4: Luke 24:25-27

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

Jesus uses what is familiar to them (“Moses and the Prophets” meant all the Hebrew Scriptures) to help them see that Jesus had to die so that the world might live. His death did not mean He was no longer in the world. Jesus is in the world through the witness that they (and we) bear. We bear witness that Christ is alive and that the Kingdom has come in part now and will come completely soon.

Question: Do you think persons we love who have died live on in our actions? Why or why not?

Challenge: Has anyone ever given up some of their life so that you might have something?

Scripture: Isaiah 53:1-12

Day 5: Luke 24:28-29

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

The two, remembering their manners, invited the stranger to eat with them. Their eating is more than just a need for food; it was an acknowledgement that they were hopeful again. A meal in the evening was a time of sharing not only their food, but of their lives. It was fellowship, the sharing of themselves.

Question: What is your favorite meal and who would you eat it with?

Challenge: Ask someone to a meal and share some of your life with them.

Scripture: Luke 24:36-43 and John 21:4-14

Day 6: Luke 24:30-31

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.

The best way to recognize someone who has changed is by their actions. Jesus had changed but when he broke the bread the words he said at the Last Supper came true, “When you eat this bread and drink this cup I am present with you.” We can see why the Lord’s Supper is a sacred event, for when we break bread in Jesus’ name He is present with us. In fact the Lord’s Supper changed the way we eat in general. Eating is no longer a time to fill our stomachs, but a time to recall Christ’s sacrifice for us. Eating provides life for us just as Jesus provides eternal life for us.

Question: What do you think is the best way to recognize someone after not seeing them for 40 years?

Challenge: For the next week before each meal pray and ask God to help you recall Christ’s sacrifice. Then after the meal, when you are full, give thanks to God for the fullness of life in Christ.

Scripture: Revelation 3:20

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

April 26, 2020

Day 1: I Corinthians 15:1-2

Now I should remind you, brothers and sisters, of the good news that I proclaimed to you, which you in turn received, in which also you stand, through which also you are being saved, if you hold firmly to the message that I proclaimed to you—unless you have come to believe in vain.

“Being saved” does not imply a process even though the words seem to point in that direction. It means that salvation is complete when we are with God in eternity. We can experience that salvation now because we have accepted God's love and feel forgiven. We do not earn our salvation, we just do not completely experience it until we are with God. Holding firm to the message allows us to feel that salvation, but if we don't hold firm we doubt and wonder if it was just a dream.

Question: What was good about the news?

Challenge: How would you explain this concept of knowing you are saved but not having it completely yet?

Scripture: Matthew 28:1-20

Day 2: I Corinthians 15:3-5

For I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

Cephas is Peter. We have here the oldest written statement of the Resurrection, because all of Paul's writings pre-date the Gospels. The account of the Resurrection was known because those who witnessed and experienced it were compelled by the experience to witness to others. People today wonder how a person can believe something as incredible as the Resurrection based on someone saying they saw something 2,000 years ago. This mystery becomes real as we believe with our whole being that Jesus is Lord. What we experience is new life and forgiveness. The new life is the experience of being connected to God. As we experience this new life we actually know what the first disciples knew on Easter morning - Christ is alive.

Question: Where did Paul “receive” this information about the Resurrection?

Challenge: Find the differences in the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection and Paul's.

Scripture: Mark 16:1-17

Day 3: I Corinthians 15:6

Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers and sisters at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

In Acts the church has its formal beginning at the day of Pentecost. However, there were believers in other parts of Judea before Pentecost. This appearance to the 500 took place in the Galilee region (which is about 60 miles north of Jerusalem). There were believers in various villages where Jesus and the Disciples preached. People who had heard Jesus preach and became followers did not necessarily leave their villages. Many stayed home and worked their farms. We have the Biblical accounts of the 12 and about 20 others who did go about the regions around Jerusalem. The church also spread through the witnessing of many others who did not leave home. As in the 1st century, today most people come to Christ through the witness of another Christian, not by coming to hear a speaker.

Question: Why do you think that Jesus only appeared to the five hundred? Why not everybody?

Challenge: Look about you this week and see where you find signs of the Resurrection.

Scripture: Luke 24:1-11

Day 4: I Corinthians 15:7

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.

James was Jesus' brother and he became the leader in the Jerusalem church after Peter. He was martyred for his faith. Early in his public ministry Jesus was questioned as to who his family really was and he said it was all those who follow him. At the cross when Jesus told John that Mary was now his mother and told Mary that John was now her son, Jesus was merging his spiritual family (the followers) with his earthly family.

Question: What happened to the rest of Jesus' family?

Challenge: Do some research to see how James died.

Scripture: Acts 11:27-12:7

Day 5: I Corinthians 15:8-9

Last of all, as to someone untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Paul, like the other disciples, witnessed the Resurrection by having a vision of Jesus while on the road to Damascus. Paul always felt he was unworthy because he persecuted the church in the years before he came to faith. Even though Paul felt “unfit” he still knew that God had called him to be an apostle (a witness to) of Jesus' Resurrection. Paul's statement of unfitness was a statement of humility. He never once believed his call was less than any of the 12.

Question: Do you think Paul, because he was last to see Jesus, is the least of the disciples?

Challenge: Paul, as Saul, did persecute the church - read Acts and see why.

Scripture: Acts 8, Galatians 1:13-16

Day 6: I Corinthians 15:10

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.

Paul knows it was the love of God that reached down to pull him out of his sin. He knows that his life (as it was going) was not leading him to God but just the opposite. He knows that the law, though of God, would not bring the Jews back from feeling exiled from God. It is God's action that brings us to a place where we know our life has become unmanageable and that we are powerless to change. We then come to believe that God does have the power to change us. We then make the move of responding to God's action by accepting and turning our will over to God in Christ Jesus.

Question: What is grace - a meal prayer or what?

Challenge: Think back to the time when you first believed that you needed God's forgiveness.

Scripture: John 1:12-20, 3:16-17