



A LENTEN SERIES EXPLORING
THE MIRACLES OF JESUS
IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

FAITHBRIDGE - OSAGE BEACH MO
www.forthelake.org

Week of February 18, 2024: THE SUNDAY OF ASHES

MONDAY: Thought – Spiritual Housecleaning

During Lent, we are called to become fully aware of who Jesus is and what he has done for us. We are also called to make sacrifices, just like Jesus made sacrifices for us. Not just to sacrifice, but to sacrifice in such a way that we create more time to grow closer in our relationship with him. Think about your life and the time you commit to other things. Name one thing you can give up during this Lenten season to make more time for your relationship with Jesus.

Prayer – Heavenly Father, give me the courage and strength to follow through on this sacrifice and to create more time for you. Amen.

TUESDAY: Thought – Take Up A Practice

During Lent, not only are we called to let go of something to create time and space for Jesus, but we are also called to pick something up. This could be acts of service, times of prayer, etc. Anything that can help bring you into an awareness of the goodness of God. What is the spiritual practice you are going to pick up during this season of Lent?

Prayer – God, give me the strength to follow through on the practice I choose and help me to experience You in it. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – Christ In All Things - Read John 1: 1-28

Neil deGrasse Tyson—Astrophysicist and author of *Astrophysics for People in a Hurry*—states in his book, “In the beginning, nearly fourteen billion years ago, all the space and all the matter and all the energy of the known universe was contained in a volume less than one-trillionth the size of the period that ends this sentence.

Conditions were so hot, the basic forces of nature that collectively describe the universe were unified. Though still unknown how it came into existence, this sub-pinpoint-size cosmos could only expand. Rapidly. In what today we call the big bang.” After reading John 1 and this excerpt from Tyson’s book, how do these two connect with one another and how do they differ? Remember, the Word represents Christ in our reading.

Prayer – Lord, help us to see that Christ was the first born of all of creation and that all things are held together and created through Christ. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – The Names Of Jesus – Read John 1: 29-51

In this passage, you will find that there are 10 different names that Jesus was called, (Lamb of God, Son of God, Rabbi, Messiah, Him—about whom Moses and Prophets wrote, Son of Joseph, Teacher, Son of God, King of Israel, Son of Man). We find here that Jesus came to fulfill more than just one role. He reveals himself differently to each of us. We even find ourselves drawn to Him for different reasons throughout our lives. What name are you calling Jesus in this season of your life?

Prayer – God, thank you for being so many different things to me throughout my life. May I always seek to see you in your fullness. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – Miracle Of Abundance – Read John 2: 1-23

Jesus' first recorded miracle in the gospels is turning water into wine. He took something ordinary and made it extraordinary. In this act, Jesus is communicating that he wants to take our offerings of ordinary life and give us something extraordinary. This is the kind of grace Jesus offers. This doesn't mean changing our roles, but doing something beautiful, something extraordinary, with what our roles are. Are you willing to hand over the roles you play in life to Jesus and allow him to turn them from water to wine?

Prayer – God, help me to allow you to take my ordinary life and do something extraordinary with it. Help me to let You turn my life from water into wine. Amen.

Week of February 25, 2024

MONDAY: Thought – Being Grateful for A Purpose Bigger Than Yourself - John 3: 22-36

Here we see John the Baptist living in joy at the news of Jesus' ministry. What's strange about this is, John's purpose in life was to prepare the way for Jesus. So, the beginning of Jesus' ministry means the end of John's ministry. To follow John and Jesus' footsteps is to live a life of service, preparing the way for others to experience life to the fullest. That means our whole life is not about making our name great, but rather, others and Jesus'. How can we make sure to check our motives and make sure that we are doing things for Jesus' name and not our own?

Prayer – Heavenly Father, help me to see that my whole life is about preparing a way for Jesus' name to be glorified and not my own. Amen.

TUESDAY: Thought – Taking Our Worries to Jesus – John 4: 43-54

The royal official is experiencing the worst day of his life. The loss of a child is a pain no one can ever truly grasp. For those who do experience this suffering, it's carried with them for the rest of their lives. In this time of desperation there is only one place he can think to go, Jesus. Right now, in your life, there are worries or fears that are causing you stress. Jesus asks us to bring those worries and fears to him. What worries and fears do you need to bring to God today?

Prayer – Lord, in desperation, I bring these things to you. Please help me, guide me, comfort me and give me strength. Above all else, I ask the bold prayer of healing. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – Rejecting Jesus – John 5: 1-29

This is the first time in the gospel of John that we see an aggressive rejection of Jesus. Many of us could never imagine rejecting Jesus in this way. However, Jesus has asked us to follow him with our lives and there are ways in which we've rejected him. Think of one thing Jesus is asking you to do to follow him. Are you doing it, or have you been rejecting him?

Prayer – God, help me to never reject You, or the life you’re calling me toward, as I follow your son, Jesus. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – Witnesses to Jesus – John 5: 30-47

The three themes in this passage are the relationships between: The Father and The Son, the witnesses and Jesus and the resistance to the witnesses. We have all been given the same God-given Spirit to inform us of God’s nature. But we also have people in our lives who help us witness who God is as well. Who are the biggest influences in your life who helped you to recognize the workings of Jesus?

Prayer – God, send me people who will help me witness about the things you’re doing in our world, and help me recognize them as Your helpers who are pointing toward you. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – Jesus Is the Source of What We Need in Life – John 6: 1-21

In these two profound miracles, we see Jesus provide two basic needs. The need of food and the need of safety and rescue. Sometimes, God does things in unique and powerful ways like walking on water and multiplying food. However, this is not the normal way God provides. Otherwise, they wouldn’t be called miracles. The way God normally works to provide a need is through His Spirit, nudging us to serve others. What is one way that you can provide a need for someone that they otherwise wouldn’t have? How can you be that miracle for them?

Prayer – Lord, help me to see the needs of others and to know how I can help provide for their needs. Amen. NOTES:

Week of March 3, 2024

MONDAY: Thought – Jesus Christ the Giver of life – John 6: 22-59

Jesus proclaims himself as the bread of life—the one who gives eternal life. For those who follow him, life is not just about believing that Jesus lived, died and resurrected, but that we are to follow the very way-of-life of Jesus. The first Christian movement called *The Way* recognized that following Jesus was a lifestyle, and by following him—forming our lives by His ways—we would find true life. How has following Jesus helped you to experience a more full and meaningful life—true life?

Prayer – Heavenly Father, guide me in recognizing Jesus as the bread of life. Fill me with the courage to eat from this bread and to allow it to renew me from within, so I may experience eternal life. Amen.

TUESDAY: Thought – Many Leave Jesus – John 6: 60-71

Jesus’ teachings become too tough for many to accept and follow. There are moments in our lives where things get tough and we have to make a decision. Do we leave the faith or do we remain in the faith even though we might have doubts, questions, or lack of understanding? Think about what those that left missed out on? All the miracles, teachings, but most importantly, the death and resurrection. The only reason the 12 disciples stayed was because they said they had nowhere else to go. Anytime faith becomes tough, remember this story. Think about what the twelve disciples would’ve missed out on if they would’ve left when the other disciples did. God has more for you. It’s okay to have questions,

it's okay to have doubts. Doubts are not the opposite of faith. Remain faithful and watch for what God still has for you to do as you continue to follow Jesus.

Prayer – God, guide me as I have doubts. Guide me as I have questions. Help me to hold on to faith and doubt at the same time, and remember, you have more for me tomorrow. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – Judging on the Character of Your Life – John 7: 1-31

Martin Luther King Jr. Stated that we shouldn't judge one another based on the color of the skin but rather on the content of their character. Jesus called for people not to judge based on appearances or religious laws but rather, by one's heart. We often see in Jesus' teaching in the book of Matthew that our job is to love, and it's God's job is to sort. And when God sorts people, grace and life always win. So when you judge, judge correctly. Focus on loving your neighbor and less on judging your neighbor.

Prayer – Lord, help me to judge correctly. You have not created me to sort others out but rather, to present love and allow that love to transform others. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – Jesus Shapes Our View of God – John 7: 32-52

When we see resistance in scripture of people reacting to Jesus' claim to be the Son of God, it's because Jesus doesn't fit their idea of what God is like. We need to remember that Jesus did not come to change God's mind about humanity. Instead, he came to change the mind of humanity about God. If your understanding of God doesn't line up with Jesus, then you must ask yourself, "Am I wrong in my understanding of God or, is Jesus wrong in his understanding of God?"

Prayer – God, help me to recognize your love and character through the lens of Jesus Christ. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – Grace Over Everything – John 8: 1-30

Jesus chooses grace over punishment every time. Here we see Jesus trapped and called to follow the law of Moses. Instead of punishment that is clearly defined in the law, he chooses to offer grace to the woman brought before him. After everyone leaves, he tells her, "Go now, and leave your life of sin." Jesus does not say this because next time he won't offer her grace. He says this to her because he doesn't want her to harm herself. He says this from a place of compassion and sympathy, not from a place of condemnation. In what aspect of your life is Jesus saying this to you? Are you listening?

Prayer – God, reveal to me the sin in my life that I need to abandon. Help me to have the strength to sin no more. Amen.

Week of March 10, 2024

MONDAY: Thought – Argument from Anger and Bitterness – John 9: 1-41

The Jewish leaders begin to argue with Jesus about the healing of a man from blindness. Even though the man is healed, the leaders appear to be angry and bitter. Why do you think they react this way? The religious leaders are not actually trying to find the truth but rather they are arguing with Jesus from a place of bitterness and anger. We do this at times as well. When we do this, no sign or truth will convince us of what really is true. Is there someone or something that you are bitter toward and you need to repent to? What is the first step you could take to change your actions and feelings about this person?

Prayer – Heavenly Father, help me to see when my grudge, my anger, my bitterness is harming others and give me the courage to repent. Amen.

TUESDAY: Thought – Jesus, the Good Shepherd – John 10: 1-21

We are sheep, Jesus is our shepherd. Often people talk about how sheep are not very intelligent and that we have to have Jesus because we're unable to figure things out on our own. This is a half-truth. The honest truth is, Jesus will always have a better idea of the bigger picture than we will. The sheep always need the guidance of the shepherd, but they are still the ones that have to move where the shepherd leads. Another thing to be mindful of is that Jesus says there are other sheep in a different sheep pen and they listen to his voice also. It's not our job, as followers of Christ, to decide who belongs to God and who doesn't. Is God drawing you toward a relationship whose belief system and lifestyle are different than yours? What will help you understand better how big God's Kingdom is? Invest in that relationship.

Prayer – God, help me to follow You and invest in relationships with people that are different than me. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – The Relationship Between the Father and the Son – John 10: 22-42

Jesus often uses stories, or parables, to communicate universal truths. The hearers of the stories are often left with the task of deciding what Jesus meant in his teaching. In this section though, we see Jesus speak clearly about his relationship with God, the Father. He says, "the Father and I are one"; "the Father is in me and I in the Father." What Jesus wants to communicate here is not how elite he is but how available God wants to make himself to humanity. What does it mean to you that God was willing to become human for you?

Prayer – Lord, thank you for living among us, as one of us. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – I Am the Resurrection and the Life – John 11: 1-27

Jesus is speaking of two different types of death when calling himself the resurrection. He's talking about the life he offers on the other side of a death to sin and the life he offers on the other side of our physical death. By following Jesus, we get to experience a new way of seeing God and a new way of seeing life. How have you viewed God and life differently because you're following Jesus?

Prayer – God, help us to experience You and life fully on both sides of death. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – Good News Disrupts Reality As It Is – John 11: 28-57

With the miracles Jesus performed, you would think they'd be great news to everyone. However, sometimes when it's good news for everyone, some view it as bad news for themselves. Usually, the people who were benefiting the most from the social norms and rules, were the ones most upset with Jesus and his teachings. In Jesus' day, it was the religious leaders who benefited the most from the social norms and rules of that day. Who would be upset today at the good news of everyone being loved, accepted and welcomed into Jesus' kingdom? Is there any part of you that would be fearful of what that might cost you should those people be included in your faith?

Prayer – God, help me to follow Jesus and sacrifice all that I have for the goodness of all creation. Give me the courage to sacrifice, whatever I need to sacrifice, and to repent of the ways I'm blocking progress from happening. Amen.

EXTRA DAY - SATURDAY: Thought – Jesus Fulfilling Prophecies – John 12: 1-26

The disciples didn't recognize the many things Jesus was doing as fulfilling prophecies until after his death and resurrection. There are often times in our lives where we don't understand something in the moment, only to have it revealed to us later. It's then that we're able to see how God was moving in

that moment. What is one way this has been confirmed in your life? Are you struggling to see God move in your life now?

Prayer – God, help us to remember your goodness in our past and remind us that you’re holding on to our present and future as well. Amen.

Week of March 17, 2024

MONDAY: Thought – The World Hated Me First – John 15: 18-27

Often, we read this and put the whole world into this picture, but it’s simply not true. There were two main groups that hated Jesus. The Jewish and Roman political leaders and the Jewish religious leaders. They were the creators and controllers of how people ordered themselves in Israel. The problem is, that Jesus came to undo that culture and the ordering of how things were in order to create a more loving and equal community. He came to elevate the value of those in the margins. When you do this, you upset those who are benefiting from the way things are, and often those who are very powerful people in the world. What is one way that people are marginalized today in the 21st century in America? What can you do about it? What fears come up when you think about standing up with them and for them?

Prayer – God, give me eyes to see those who are harmed by the way things are in society. Give me the courage to stand with them and for them, no matter my fears. Amen

TUESDAY: Thought – The Work of the Holy Spirit – John 16: 1-15

We have all been blessed with the ever-present Holy Spirit that flows within and around us. The Holy Spirit helps us to know when we’ve missed the mark in life. He helps us to know the path we’re called to walk when following Jesus. He also helps us to see others and their joys and sufferings, so we can be God’s hands and feet. Write down three ways you have missed the mark this week. Write down three ways you have seen God guide you this week. Lastly, go and encourage three people in your life today.

Prayer – God, help me to see when I miss the mark and forgive me when I repent. Help me to see the path you lay before me and give me an encouraging spirit toward others. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – Jesus Reveals Himself In Many Ways – John 16: 16-33

William Barclay says that Jesus reveals four things about himself in this passage. He reveals his loneliness— to go forward knowing that most of his disciples will abandon him, his forgiveness—after his disciples do what he said they’d do he forgives them, his sympathy—by him telling them on the front end what’s about to happen, it helps the disciples return to him after his death so they don’t go into complete despair, and the gift of Jesus—he was always offering himself to them. Which of these characteristics of Jesus are you most connected to today? Why?

Prayer – God, help me to find myself in the story of your son, Jesus. Place me in the story, so I can see what way I need Jesus in my life today. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – The Prayer of Jesus – John 17: 1-26

Here we see Jesus' prayer toward God. We see the heart of Jesus toward us and his disciples. We also see what he longs for in his community. We must recognize ourselves within God and God within us, and also unity among the community. Take time today to recognize ways in which you are in the flow of God. Then take time to recognize relationships that need your attention in order to bring peace and unity in the body of Christ.

Prayer – God, help me to know that I am in you and you are in me. Help me focus on the unity of your creation. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – The Hour Has Come – John 18: 1-24

Jesus' biggest trial in his life has now begun. It's time for him to reveal to us that even God suffers on earth. There's nothing that can keep us from hardship and suffering in this life. What suffering and hardship is taking place in your life right now? Share your burdens with God and someone you love, so they can be with you during that suffering.

Prayer – God, help me to understand that you came to be with us in our suffering. Suffering is not something that separates you and I, but bonds us. May it bond us even more. Amen.

Week of March 24, 2024 (Holy Week)

MONDAY: Thought – From Good to Bad – John 19: 1-27

Throughout John, we have seen Jesus be a gracious judge and a loving King. However, now we see Jesus take on the role of an accused criminal and a mock king who is being humiliated. This passage reveals to us the length that Jesus was willing to go to, to show us his love for us. He wants us to understand the full picture of God. A God that does not use his power to destroy and punish his creation, but rather, to connect to his creation. How does this transition of good to bad connect with you?

Prayer – God, give us understanding of your love through the sentencing of Jesus. Amen. NOTES:

TUESDAY: Thought – God Died – John 19: 28-42

God embodied flesh fully and dwelt among us. He lived for 33 years as a son, brother, neighbor, friend, Jew, and Rabbi. Then, he was murdered by the religious and political elite. What thoughts and feelings does this stir up within you?

Prayer – God, help me to know my emotions and thoughts when I process the death You went through. Amen.

WEDNESDAY: Thought – The Gardener – John 20: 1-18

The first disciple Jesus Christ appears to is a woman, Mary Magdalene. She, at first, thought he was a gardener, but then he fully reveals himself. Jesus Christ is still revealing himself today. To be a follower of Jesus and call yourself a Christian is to see Christ in everyone and every thing. Even a gardener. Pay attention today and journal everywhere that you saw Christ today.

Prayer – Christ, help me to see you in everyone and every thing. Amen.

THURSDAY: Thought – The Resurrection Is Hard to Believe – John 20: 19-30

Thomas does what most of us would do, he doubts. I mean, would you believe after someone was killed and had a funeral that they were still alive? But Jesus allows Thomas to touch his wounds. Know, in that very moment, Jesus had you in mind. He knew it would be a lot harder for you to believe because you did not see him. We're asked to take the word of an eye-witness and be open to what the Spirit within us is nudging us to see. It's okay to doubt. Doubt is not the opposite of faith. But know that Jesus called you blessed, because he knew your faith would carry you through your doubts. Write down the doubts you experience. God is with you in the midst of them.

Prayer – God, guide me in remembering that you are with me in the midst of my doubt. Amen.

FRIDAY: Thought – Jesus Waiting For Time With You – John 21: 1-14

The disciples were fishing when they saw that Jesus was on the bank. He had a fire going ready to eat and be with his disciples. Jesus is always ready for time with his brothers and sisters. There is never a time when Jesus denies us relationship. Any relationship in our life requires commitment and one-on-one time for it to flourish. Make time for Jesus as well. He is always ready. Pull up your calendar and create time for you and Jesus to be together. This can be done through looking at his teachings in the Bible, or a time of prayer where you share with Jesus and also sit in silence with him.

Prayer – God, give me the courage to make time for you. Help me to know that you're always ready. Amen.

SATURDAY: Thought – God Always Forgives – John 21: 15-25

Jesus reinstates Peter. He does not condemn Peter or cast him aside. Jesus asks Peter if he loves him three times and then asks Peter to follow him. Today Jesus asks you the same thing. Do you love Jesus? Do you really love him? Are you sure you love him? Will you follow him? Get ready, tomorrow we get to celebrate the good news that's for all of us. Life wins because Jesus resurrected from the dead!

Prayer – God, prepare our hearts to love you, follow you and celebrate you because your son, Jesus Christ, resurrected from the dead. Amen.

May you find a place to worship tomorrow for Easter Sunday. And may you find new life in the death and resurrection of Jesus.