

LION + LAMB

We are living in the midst of a global crisis.

COVID-19 has brought tremendous challenges to our community, our country, and our world, resulting in uncertainty and fear. We long for stability and control, but right now we see just how powerless we really are. Yet even in our crisis, God still speaks. Jesus entered into human history to show us how to find hope and peace. If we ever needed hope and peace, it is certainly today! This devotional series will lead us through key passages of the gospel of Matthew to show us how Jesus provides hope and peace in the midst of all of life's circumstances. He provides hope because He is the Lion of Judah. In the Bible, lions are often used to represent a king, and Jesus, the Lion of Judah, is the King of promise who we can look to for hope. More than that, Jesus is also the lamb. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! Jesus provides the way of peace! We hope through this uncertain time you can find hope and peace through Jesus Christ.

PRAYER

Father, I confess that there is so much uncertainty in my life. I have fears and concerns that overwhelm me. Open my eyes to see You, Jesus, as my hope and peace. Jesus, You are the Lion and the Lamb who has come for me!

Genesis 49:9-10

⁹Judah is a lion's cub; from the prey, my son, you have gone up. He stooped down; he crouched as a lion and as a lioness; who dares rouse him? ¹⁰The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Matthew 1:1-2

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. ²Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers.

Revelation 5:5

Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered[...].

MEET THE LION

There is a certain magic in taking a child to the zoo. Maybe you still feel the magic yourself! We love to see the immense elephants, giraffes whose necks reach into the skies, or seals who swim easily, almost majestically, through the water. Yet one animal is always a must-see for everyone: the lions. Witnessing the power and beauty and fierceness of lions up close fills us with fear and awe. It is no wonder the lion has been used in ancient cultures as a symbol of royalty.

In Matthew 1:1, we see the beginning of Jesus' genealogy. Two towering Biblical figures are listed: Abraham and David. Abraham is the father of the Jewish nation. David is the beloved king. Jesus is both Jewish in origin and He is in the line of kings! We can have hope because the true King has come. Jesus fulfills God's promise to provide His people with a King! In the midst of a crisis, we want someone who is powerful enough to control the things we cannot. Hope begins when we come to the true King, Jesus.

LOOK AT THE WORD

Read Genesis 49:9-10. What is the significance of the scepter?

Read Matthew 1:1-2. Circle the names listed. Who are these people? What do you know about them?

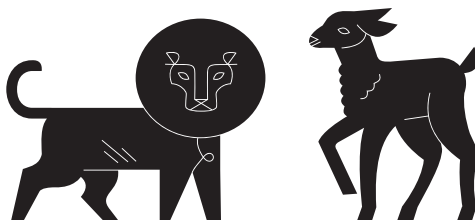
Read Revelation 5:5. These words are being said about Jesus. John, the writer of Revelation, is told to weep no longer. Why? What has Jesus done to conquer?

WHAT'S NEXT?

In the midst of this crisis of COVID-19, what questions would you ask God if you could?

Spend a few moments writing down these questions and bringing these concerns to God in prayer.

Knowing that Jesus has conquered through His death and resurrection, how can Jesus give you have hope during this crisis?



PRAYER

Jesus, help me to see You today as the most important part of my life. I often become distracted by pressures or circumstances. Prepare my heart so I may be a person ready for You.

Matthew 3:1-17

¹In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, ²“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” ³For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’” ⁴Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. ⁵Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him, ⁶and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. ⁷But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? ⁸Bear fruit in keeping with repentance. ⁹And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham. ¹⁰Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ¹¹“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹²His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” ¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; ¹⁷and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”

PREPARING THE LION’S PATH

Great events are preceded by a great announcement. ESPN sends “College Game Day” to cover the upcoming football match up. Michael Buffer provides his iconic phrase before a great boxing match: “Let’s Get Ready to Rumble!” Kings of old would send forerunners to repair roads and prepare people for his arrival. Jesus’ entrance into His public ministry was no less of an iconic announcement. His cousin, John the Baptist, fully embraced his role as an ambassador for the king. John spent his days in the wilderness eating wild food, wearing camel’s hair clothing, and proclaiming a message of repentance. Repentance? Yes,

the Greek word transliterated “metanoeō” carries the idea of changing one’s mind and action. Repenting means we need to change our thoughts and our actions to align with Jesus.

It can be easy to assume we are aligned with Jesus. However, when life is disrupted, finances get tight, or the future looks uncertain, we often become misaligned as we focus on the problems more than Jesus. How can our minds and hearts be prepared for Jesus to do His work?

LOOK IN THE WORD

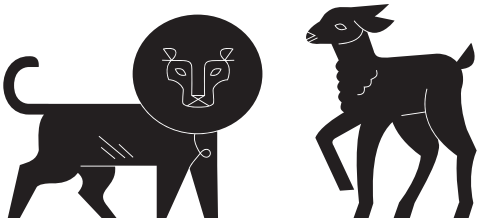
Look at Matthew 3:1-3. How have you not prioritized Jesus in your life?

What specific changes in attitude and action would you make? Perhaps you can begin to pray more consistently or ask God’s forgiveness for not prioritizing Him.

Look at Matthew 3:13-17. What is said about Jesus from Heaven?

WHAT’S NEXT?

Spend some time asking God to soften your heart and align you with what Jesus is doing.
Write out your concerns for the day and ask Jesus to give you wisdom in how to deal with them.
Thank Jesus for coming!



PRAYER

Lord God, Your Word speaks of Your strength, Your might, Your control, Your wisdom, Your ability to heal, and Your control of all of my circumstances. Today, I pray You would help me to trust in who You are, regardless of those circumstances.

Matthew 4:1-11

¹Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. ²And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. ³And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” ⁴But he answered, “It is written, “‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” ⁵Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple ⁶and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’” ⁷Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’” ⁸Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. ⁹And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” ¹⁰Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’” ¹¹Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

1 Corinthians 10:13

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

THE PROVEN LION KING

“Look, Simba. Everything the light touches is our kingdom... A king’s time as ruler rises and falls like the sun. One day, Simba, the sun will set on my time here, and will rise with you as the new king,” says King Mufasa from the Pride Rock overlook. Sitting beside him, illuminated by the rising sun in the cool of the morning, is his son, Simba. The cub is officially next in line for the throne, qualified by birth. Only a short time earlier, he had been confirmed in a great ceremony as the next king, being held high in the sky by the strong and wise hands of the elder, Rafiki. He did not know it then, but what stood in front of young Simba was a great test that answered one question: would this young lion prove himself fit for the throne?

Today’s passage keeps us in the wilderness and asks the exact same question, but with a different Lion.

Jesus, the Lion of Judah, is faced with a great test in Matthew 4. Driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, having eaten nothing for 40 days and 40 nights, Satan, “the tempter,” appears before Jesus. The two trade blows in the wilderness. This tempter, even at his strongest, stands no chance against the Lion of Judah, even at His weakest. Jesus claims a swift and skillful

victory, brandishing nothing but the Word of God as His weapon.

Dr. Thomas Constable would describe the situation like this: “Jesus’ genealogy and virgin birth prove His legal human qualification as Israel’s King. His baptism was the occasion of His divine approval. His temptation demonstrated His moral fitness to reign.”

Our King has proven Himself worthy of the throne. Will we, now, follow the example He set in the midst of isolation?

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look again at this account. What does “the tempter” target in Jesus’ life?

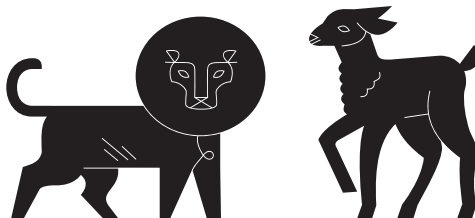
How does Jesus respond when Satan tempts Him?

Why is Jesus able to respond to Satan as He did?

WHAT’S NEXT?

Who was with Jesus out there in the wilderness? Trick question: no one was with Jesus! Other than the company of the Holy Spirit, Jesus was in isolation. For Jesus, this was a challenging but incredibly useful time. Many of us are in a similar season of wilderness isolation. Do you view this time as a waste or an opportunity?

Two things that often contribute to added temptation are (1) a lack of rhythm, and (2) solitude. Are there any new ways you are currently being tempted toward sin? Are there any old sin patterns you have seen returning? Take a minute, write them out, and pray for Christ’s strength to overcome those temptations.



PRAYER

Father, thank You for the amazing gifts you have provided in my life. As I spend time meditating on Your Word today, please show me what it looks like to live a life characterized by Your redeeming grace.

Matthew 5:1-16

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons[a] of God.

¹⁰“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. ¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. ¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

THE LION'S PEOPLE

Who are you, really? Over the years, you may have interacted with many different stereotypical groups: the cool crowd, the athletes, the artists, the academics, the wealthy, the poor, the Christian, the secular. Every group has social norms required to enter in or stay in, and learning these norms while adopting these attitudes can be exhausting. Even as an adult, these social demographics and pressures still exist. However, Jesus cut through the cultural norms of His day and clarifies what His people should look like. In Matthew 5-7, we receive the most revolutionary teaching the world has ever heard. He astonishes every listener by the power of His words and the authority of His message. Jesus describes the characteristics of His people, but these are not actions to mimic. Instead, as Oswald Chambers states, “The Sermon on the Mount’ is a statement of life we will live when the Holy Spirit is getting His way in us.” We become the Lion’s people when His Spirit changes us from the inside out. If we become this type of person, we can shine like lights in this world. We will stand out as different when people see us truly changed by Jesus’ grace.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Read through Matthew 5:1-11. Which of the attitudes is hardest for you to accept or live out?

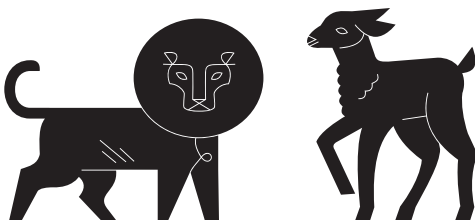
Take out a piece of paper and list out what will be received by these “blessed” people. (i.e. Matthew 5:3, “theirs is the kingdom of heaven”)

Have you known someone who truly looked like the “blessed person” described by Jesus? What did they do that made them shine bright for Jesus?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Pick one of the qualities that is most difficult for you to model. Write it out and begin to ask Jesus to change your heart so that you can fully be that kind of person.

Are you ever tempted to hide or downplay your Christian identity? What verse from this passage can give you confidence when you struggle to identify as one of the Lion's people?



PRAYER

Father, thank You for giving me the greatest gift I could ever ask or hope for: the salvation of my soul. Thank You for choosing me, for adopting me, for redeeming me, and for rescuing me from my sin. Today, would You help me to respond with grateful obedience?

Matthew 5:17-20

¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Romans 3:21-25

²¹But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, ²⁵whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.

THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LION LAMB

Imagine you have found yourself right back in your eighth grade algebra class. It is a regular Wednesday morning, until a new teacher walks in. “This is not Mr. Oldman,” fellow students whisper through gritted teeth. No, this is Ms. Newman, and, despite her newfound opposition, she is there to teach algebra. She begins, and the students, now boiling in their seats, listen to her spout a new method that seems to them ridiculous and nonsensical. Some are even so bold as to say, “This is not algebra at all.”

This, to the Pharisees and religious teachers of Jesus’ time, was exactly what He came to do—teach a confusing and errant message. Today’s passage proves otherwise.

Jesus, in this loving and challenging address, explains that His purpose is not to abolish or ignore the Law and the Prophets (the whole Old Testament, in other words). Instead, Jesus came to fulfill them as both the conquering Lion and the sacrificial Lamb. This is a message that would have filled scribes and Pharisees with rage but now fills us with hope and joy.

Jesus is the Promised Lion Lamb who sacrificed Himself on our behalf and rules on His throne.

LOOK AT THE WORD

Look at the passage again. Does Jesus, in light of this, instruct His listeners to abandon the Law?

What does Jesus set as the requirement for entering the kingdom of heaven? Is He being serious? Is this standard actually possible?

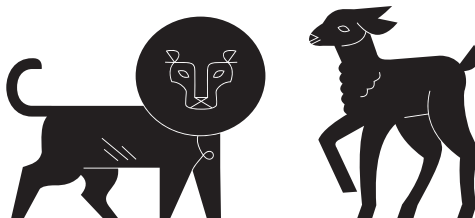
Read Romans 3:21-25. What is the requirement for entering the kingdom of heaven in these verses?

WHAT'S NEXT?

This is great news! Our entering into Christ's Kingdom is 0% dependent upon us, and 100% dependent upon Him. Take a moment to thank God for this truth.

Notice the truth woven into Christ's words here. He still desires for us to obey His teachings. How can you obey Christ today?

Think of one person you know who is living in this Pharisee mindset, assuming their own righteousness will allow them entrance into God's kingdom. Pray now for them to choose to place their faith in Jesus, and pray for an opportunity to share the truth of today's devotional with them.



PRAYER

Lord, free me from the anxieties of life! There is always something to worry about and trials that come my way. Help me to rest in knowing that You care and that You will provide enough for me today.

Matthew 6:25-34

²⁵ “Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? ²⁶Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? ²⁷And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? ²⁸And why are you anxious about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, ²⁹yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. ³⁰But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? ³¹Therefore do not be anxious, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ ³²For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. ³⁴ “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

A LION’S PROTECTION

If there is anything that can squeeze the joy out of any moment, it is worry. One of our Grace staff members recently came across a website that had a list of “twenty things you can worry about beside the thing you are worried about.” No, thank you! We all have our own worst-case scenarios to run through—we do not need another list! There are so many things we worry about: our finances, our jobs, our kids, our houses, our cars, our clothes, upcoming events, canceled events. Does Jesus have anything to say to those of us who have many legitimate worries in life? Yes! His instruction is, “Do not worry.” Luckily, He says more than just that. He actually lists everything we worry about: food, water, clothing—living. He lists every worry and says, “Do not worry.” Why? Because God knows our needs. If we know the Lion of Judah, Jesus Christ, we can be certain He cares for our needs. We no longer have to live locked up in worry if we have confidence in a God who cares. Even more, we can actually live boldly, passionately, and freely. We can seek His kingdom and live for God if we actually know Him and how much He cares.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Look at Matthew 6:25-30. Which of these worries best describes you?

Jesus diagnoses the problem of our worry in Matthew 6:30: “little faith.” In what ways is your faith “little” in this time?

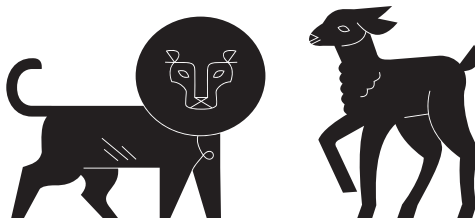
God does not promise to solve your worries in the way we want. He does, however, give us something to seek in Matthew 6:33. What does it look like for you to seek His kingdom and His righteousness?

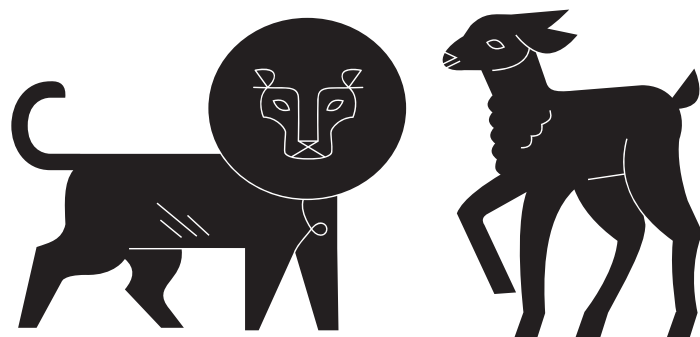
WHAT'S NEXT?

Write out all of your worries. Get them on paper!

Ask God what He thinks of these worries. Are they as big a deal to Him as they are to you?

Instead of spending too much time worrying, who can you reach out to this week and encourage with these verses?





LION + LAMB

We are excited that you have joined us as we study this next section of the Gospel of Matthew. We will cover sections from chapter 8-19. One major theme through this entire section is that of Jesus' authority over every part of life. As we study, focus on how Jesus, the Lion of Judah, has power over everything. In this time, when many of us are home-bound due to a global epidemic, many of us are asking, "*who has the power to help?*" We will see that Jesus does have the power to help, but He does so in his time and in His way. Jesus' timing is perfect, but often misunderstood by His disciples. The same is true for us today! We do not always understand Jesus' timing, but we can trust in Him.

PRAYER

Jesus, I believe what the Bible says about you. I believe that you were capable of healing lepers while you were on the Earth, and I believe you are capable of healing sickness today. Bolster my faith in you and your divine ability today.

Matthew 8:1-4

When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed Him. ²And a leper came to Him and bowed down before Him, and said, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” ³Jesus stretched out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. ⁴And Jesus said to him, “See that you tell no one; but go, show yourself to the priest and present the offering that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.”

THE MIRACLE-WORKING LION

Imagine finding yourself as one of Jesus Christ’s disciples at this point in His ministry. This man had quickly proven Himself unique... He was a descendent of David, He was birthed by a virgin, God literally spoke the moment He was baptized, He defeated Satan in the wilderness after starving Himself for forty days, and He taught like no teacher before Him.

“What else is this man capable of?” is a natural question. Today’s verses answer that question, introducing us to a new chapter in Jesus’ ministry— His miracles. These miracles teach us more and more about the Lion of Judah, but we should be diligent not to miss what the healing of the leper here in Matthew 8 teaches us.

Jesus, the Lion of Judah, has authority over sickness.

What a needed message for early 2020! If this message is true, then our response to today’s viruses and the future’s illnesses should be completely derived from this knowledge.

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look over Leviticus 13-14. With this context in mind, does this situation seem more significant?



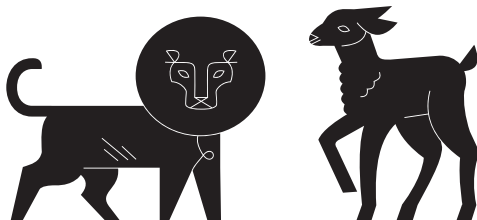
Look closely at the leper's actions and words in verse 2. What do you notice about the way he approaches Jesus?

Now look at Jesus' actions and words in verse 3. What do you notice about the way He approaches this unclean leper?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Knowing that Jesus has authority over sickness should completely shape the way God's people respond to Covid-19. Think and write out how you can respond more appropriately.

Once you've done this, take a few minutes and pray a few big prayers. Ask God to heal the sick, end the spread of the virus, protect you and your loved ones, and most importantly, to draw people to Himself. He is capable of answering every one of those prayers, after all.



PRAYER

Father, help me trust you in times of uncertainty. Help me rest in your promises while storms may rage around me. Increase my faith in every circumstance. Give me peace that surpasses human understanding. Show me more of who you are in today's study.

Matthew 8:23-27

When He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him. ²⁴And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus Himself was asleep. ²⁵And they came to Him and woke Him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing!" ²⁶He said to them, "Why are you afraid, you men of little faith?" Then He got up and rebuked the winds and the sea, and it became perfectly calm. ²⁷The men were amazed, and said, "What kind of a man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?"

THE LION IN THE STORM

Nature is scary. Mountains are treacherous, the ocean feels bottomless, and possums look like giant rats. We can feel powerless against the forces of nature whenever lightning strikes, a tornado forms, or a hurricane lands. We feel powerless, because oftentimes, we are.

Many of Jesus' disciples were men who spent the majority of their time battling against nature as fishermen. They had to fight the winds and brave the waves to feed themselves and provide for their families. And yet, when faced by a storm in Matthew 8, these men were still terrified by the awesome power of nature.

In their terror, the disciples ran to Jesus, asking him to help in whatever way he could. When Jesus commanded the winds and the waves to immediately calm, the disciples were left wondering just who Jesus was and what power he held. We may not have seen Jesus calm a storm, but we have seen our God move powerfully in ours and others lives. Jesus Christ has defeated the grave and overcome the world, therefore we do not have to live in fear like other people who do not know him. So when our storms arrive, where do we run in our hearts and minds?

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew 8:23-24. What "storms" are you facing that cause you to fear?



Look at Matthew 8:25-27. How did Jesus respond to the disciples and then to the storm? How do you see both the humanity and deity of Jesus displayed in this event?

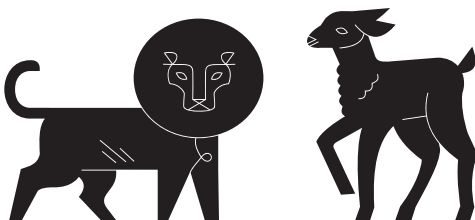
How does this exercise of Jesus' authority affect your view of circumstances beyond your own control?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Write out a few situations or events that bring fear to your mind and heart.

Spend some time acknowledging God's control over those elements that cause fear. Thank the Lord for his promise of eternal life beyond this world for those who place their trust in Jesus Christ.

Ask God to increase your faith so that your attitude and actions can serve as a clear witness to the saving power of Jesus Christ.



PRAYER

Father, convict me of my prideful judgment and personal failure. Bring my sin into the light so that my need for your healing and forgiveness is inescapable. Thank you for your mercy, which is new every day and is freely given by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Fix my attention and affection upon you today.

Matt 9:9-13

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him. ¹⁰Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" ¹²But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: 'I desire compassion, and not sacrifice,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

THE LAMB'S MERCY

Conflict is hard. Our disagreements can often cause divisions if they are not handled in a correct and healthy manner. Many times, the greatest hurdle to healthy conflict resolution stems from an inability for either side to admit fault. We find ourselves quick in judging the mistakes of others while justifying our own.

When Jesus chose to associate with Matthew the tax collector, there was probably a collective gasp in the crowd. How could this holy teacher bring that corrupt agent into his community of followers? Why would this miracle-worker share a meal with those criminals who profit from the exploitation of the Jewish nation? What is Jesus doing, spending time with such sinners?

Until we understand our own need for the unconditional love and forgiveness of God, we will always struggle to extend that same love and forgiveness to others. The Pharisees were so focused upon their commitment to religious ritual and tradition that they had become effectively blinded to their own sin. Accepting the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ begins with acknowledging the consequences of sin in our lives. Do we have the courage to confess our need for Christ?

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew 9:9-11. Who would Jesus have to join for dinner in order for you to be completely shocked? Who do you think of as "outside" the salvific mission of Christ?

Look at Matthew 9:12-13. What are the differences between the attitude of Jesus and the attitude of the Pharisees? How do those attitudes affect their actions?



Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6 in his response to the Pharisees. Read Matthew 23:23-28 to see another response against the hypocrisy of heartless religion.

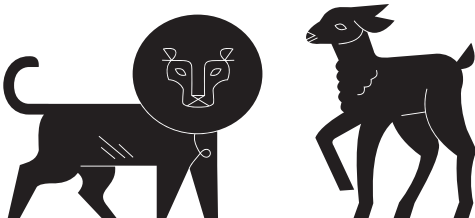
WHAT'S NEXT?

Ask the Lord to convict you of sin that you have failed to confess.

Write out some of the sins you have committed and trust that God is faithful to forgive all our failure through the saving sacrifice of Jesus Christ.



Thank God for his consistent compassion and overwhelming grace. Ask for a softened heart that is listening to his Spirit and following his lead.



PRAYER

Jesus, you are my Healer. I bring my shame and my brokenness to you. All of it. Thank you for forgiving me and making me whole. Help me to believe that nothing is impossible for you!

Matthew 9.18-26

¹⁸While He was saying these things to them, a synagogue official came and bowed down before Him, and said, “My daughter has just died; but come and lay Your hand on her, and she will live.” ¹⁹Jesus got up and began to follow him, and so did His disciples. ²⁰And a woman who had been suffering from a hemorrhage for twelve years, came up behind Him and touched the fringe of His cloak; ²¹for she was saying to herself, “If I only touch His garment, I will get well.” ²²But Jesus turning and seeing her said, “Daughter, take courage; your faith has made you well.” At once the woman was made well. ²³When Jesus came into the official’s house, and saw the flute-players and the crowd in noisy disorder, ²⁴He said, “Leave; for the girl has not died, but is asleep.” And they began laughing at Him. ²⁵But when the crowd had been sent out, He entered and took her by the hand, and the girl got up. ²⁶This news spread throughout all that land.

THE LAMB’S HEALING POWER

Have you ever struggled with something for so long that it felt like it became a part of your identity? After so much time, maybe you gave up hope of experiencing any freedom so you allowed the struggle to consume every aspect of your life. If you can’t relate to this personally, you probably know someone close to you who is so stuck and desperate for healing.

That’s where we find the bleeding woman we read about in today’s passage. At the time she encountered Jesus, she was at the end of herself. For twelve whole years, this woman suffered alone— completely isolated and without any resources. This medical condition had taken away all of her community, all of her money, and all of her sense of worth. She tried everything that the world had to offer to fix her brokenness, yet nothing worked.

You might not be twelve years into a hopeless situation like this, but every one of us has experienced brokenness. It is our human tendency to run to the things of this world to pacify our pain and cover up our shame. But it will never be enough. The world will always leave us more empty and broken than before. It is impossible to fix ourselves. We need a Healer.

This woman heard about Jesus and believed that He could save her, and she was right. With just one touch, the bleeding immediately stopped. Only Jesus has the power to heal and restore the brokenness in our lives.

No matter how long the sin or suffering has consumed your life, there is always hope in Jesus. He is gracious and compassionate and he longs to heal you. Do you believe him?

LOOK IN THE WORD

Read Mark 5:21-43 and Luke 8:40-56. What else do you learn about this woman's situation from the other synoptic Gospel accounts?

Is there something that is gripping your life and causing you to be isolated from the people who love you? In what ways do you tend to turn to the world for a solution to your problems?

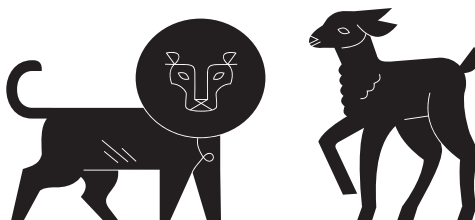
Look at Matthew 9:22. How does Jesus address the bleeding woman after she touched him? What does this tell you about how he feels about your brokenness?

WHAT'S NEXT?

Ask God to search your heart and reveal any sin or brokenness that is keeping you from experiencing His fullness.

Write out the areas of your life where you desire healing and pray that God's healing power would set you free!

Thank Jesus for his gentleness and kindness. Thank him that he calls you "son" or "daughter" and longs to look you in the face and heal you.



PRAYER

Jesus, I know that apart from you I can do nothing. Detached from the vine, I'm an incapable branch. Today, please help me to set aside my fleshly desires and submit to you and abide in you.

Matthew 11:25-30

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to infants. ²⁶Yes, Father, for this way was well-pleasing in Your sight. ²⁷All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. ²⁸"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."

THE LION'S OFFER

A nation-wide phenomenon occurs every four years in the United States. In preparation for this event, a few men and women show up regularly on our TVs, phones, newspapers, and billboards. They debate one another on hot topics, inspire people to hold signs on street corners, kiss babies' foreheads, take photos with grandmothers, and ultimately ask us one gutsy question: will you choose me to lead this nation?

Today's passage centers on the same question, but comes with an offer that no modern President can provide. Jesus, speaking symbolically to the entire nation of Israel, asks this: Will you weary people trade the heavy burden of your sin and its consequences for my present and eternal rest? Will you trade your burdensome yoke for mine, which is light and easy? Will you submit to me as your nation's rightful leader?

This is a pivotal, climactic moment in Jesus' ministry as the authoritative Lion of Judah. The people of Israel then, and us today, are left with a choice.

LOOK IN THE WORD

What do you learn about the relationship between Jesus and God the Father in verses 25-27?



What do you think the difference is between “the wise” and the “little children?”

Who would the laborers and heavy laden have been in this passage?

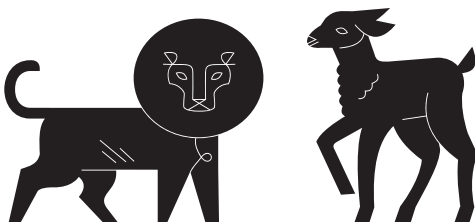
What does Jesus mean by “rest for your soul” here?

WHAT'S NEXT?

The imagery Jesus uses here is of an ox willingly submitting to the farmer, allowing him to place his yoke upon his shoulders. How do you feel about being on the ox side of this image, being asked to submit to Jesus' leading and guidance and direction for your life?

Pray for the humility to submit to God's leading instead of your own.

Abide in Christ today, for his yoke is easy and his burden is light. How great a gift to be led by a leader like Him.



PRAYER

Jesus, I often do not understand why you do the things you do! Yet, help me to trust your word even when I do not fully grasp your ways. Make my heart soft and receptive to your word and able to receive what you say.

Mathew 13.1-23

That day Jesus went out of the house and was sitting by the sea. ²And large crowds gathered to Him, so He got into a boat and sat down, and the whole crowd was standing on the beach. ³ And He spoke many things to them in parables, saying, “Behold, the sower went out to sow; ⁴ and as he sowed, some seeds fell beside the road, and the birds came and ate them up. ⁵ Others fell on the rocky places, where they did not have much soil; and immediately they sprang up, because they had no depth of soil. ⁶ But when the sun had risen, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷ Others fell among the thorns, and the thorns came up and choked them out. ⁸ And others fell on the good soil and yielded a crop, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. ⁹ He who has ears, let him hear.” ¹⁰ And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” ¹¹ Jesus answered them, “To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. ¹² For whoever has, to him more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. ¹³ Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. ¹⁴ In their case the prophecy of Isaiah is being fulfilled, which says,

‘You will keep on hearing, but will not understand;

You will keep on seeing, but will not perceive;

¹⁵ *For the heart of this people has become dull,*

With their ears they scarcely hear,

And they have closed their eyes,

Otherwise they would see with their eyes,

Hear with their ears,

And understand with their heart and return,

And I would heal them.’

¹⁶ But blessed are your eyes, because they see; and your ears, because they hear. ¹⁷ For truly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it. ¹⁸ “Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. ²⁰ The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; ²¹ yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away. ²² And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. ²³ And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

THE LION'S WORDS

A shift is a change in position, direction or tendency. Shifts happen all the time. We see shifts in fashion, shifts in purchasing, shifts in technology. In Matthew 13 we see a shift in Jesus' ministry. He transitions to teaching in parables. The word parable comes from the Greek word transliterated (para ballo), which means "to throw alongside." A parable makes a comparison between two ideas. If we understand the parable then we can understand how Jesus is working in our lives. However, parables take more work to understand. At the beginning of this shift, Jesus tells the parable of the soils. The soil represents the heart, the seed represents Jesus' teaching, and the results vary. A great question to ask ourselves is, "how do I respond to Jesus' words?" Some hearts are hard. Some hearts are rocky. Some hearts are filled by worries. Some hearts are soft and receptive. However, we do not have the ability to change our hearts. We can change behaviors, we can discipline ourselves, but desires run much deeper than behavior or discipline. Changing my heart requires a miracle! Fortunately, Jesus can change us deeply, if we let Him. We can open ourselves to be changed if we open ourselves to Jesus' words.

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Jesus' description of the four soils in Matthew 13:18-23. Write out the four types of soils.

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What causes the word to not be effective in three soils?

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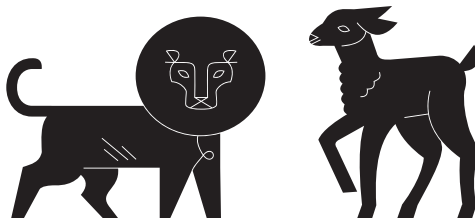
Think about your response to Jesus' teaching, which soil best describes you? We are probably a bit of all four at times.

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WHAT'S NEXT?

Spend some time asking the Lord what areas of your life where you are not being obedient to Jesus' words. Make a list of actions that would bring you into obedience.

Ask the Lord to begin changing your heart to want to be obedient to Him!



PRAYER

Jesus, help me to see you as the greatest good in my life. So often I try to be “good enough” to receive your smile. I try to earn my way into your love by my behavior, but I know it is never “good” enough. Help me rest on your gift of eternal life alone!

Matthew 19:16-30

¹⁶ And someone came to Him and said, “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?” ¹⁷ And He said to him, “Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” ¹⁸ Then he *said to Him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; ¹⁹ Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” ²⁰ The young man said to Him, “All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?” ²¹ Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” ²² But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. ²³ And Jesus said to His disciples, “Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴ Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” ²⁵ When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, “Then who can be saved?” ²⁶ And looking at them Jesus said to them, “With people this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” ²⁷ Then Peter said to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?” ²⁸ And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name’s sake, will receive many times as much, and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are first will be last; and the last, first.

THE GOOD LION

If you ask the average teenager in the United States today, “what do you want to be when you grow up?”, you will receive a variety of answers. A survey of 3,000 kids, ages eight through twelve, revealed that they desired to be a YouTube star more than becoming an astronaut. Why? For many, the American hero is the young, rich and famous. There is something alluring about that persona. Who walks up to Jesus in this passage? A young, wealthy man. In the Jewish first century, just like the 21st century, the young and successful were idolized. They believed wealth demonstrated God’s pleasure. If you were young and wealthy, surely you were on God’s good side. However, there was something missing in this young man’s life. So, he sought out Jesus for some answers. He approaches Jesus politely and asks in Matthew 19:16, “what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus responds with a question that reveals the problem. “Good” is only applied to God. Good means perfect, flawless. That is why Jesus says in Matthew 19:21, “if you want to be perfect...” The problem the young man faced was that he believed he could earn eternal life. Can I be good enough to earn it? No.

There are no amount of good deeds that could make this young man right in God's sight. Eternal Life is a gift that requires an eternally perfect sacrifice. This misunderstanding is so common in our culture. Ask the average person how to get to heaven, and they will likely respond (if they believe in heaven) "live a good life." But, "good" is pretty broad in our culture. God is pretty specific in what He considers "good." His definition is perfection. Perfection is impossible with men, but possible because of the God-man Jesus Christ.

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matt 19.16-19. What does the young man want Jesus to answer for him?

Why does Jesus ask the young man to sell everything? Do the poor get into heaven before the rich? (No, the poor can sometimes see their need more easily).

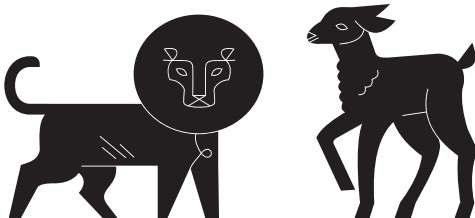
The disciples were confused at this conversation. What comfort does Jesus give them?

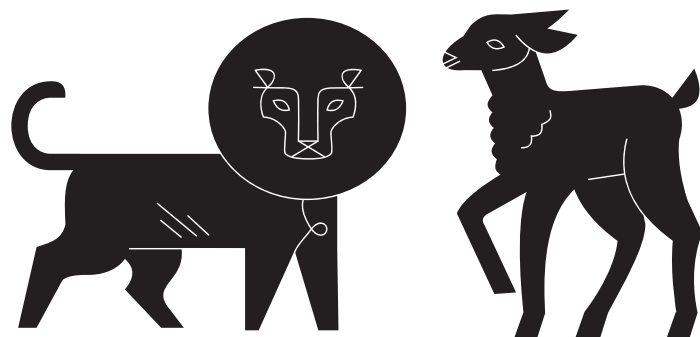
WHAT'S NEXT?

Eternal Life is based on Jesus' perfect life, it cannot be earned. Are there times when you feel like you are trying to earn your way to God? Describe how.

Jesus is supposed to be our highest value. That is part of what Jesus is asking for from this young man. Where in your own life do you valued stuff more than Jesus?

You are saved by grace, not by being perfect. The disciples could ultimately trust Jesus with their future, so can you!





LION + LAMB

The most significant event to the Christian is coming, the resurrection! Every year we celebrate the fact that Jesus rose from the dead, the tomb is empty, sins are forgiven and hope is restored to the world! However, there remains a cross and grave before death is defeated. This section of the devotional series will walk through the final week of Jesus' life. Jesus' entrance begins with excitement, enters into tragedy, but ends victoriously. In the immortal words of S.M. Lockridge, "It's Friday, but Sunday's coming!"

PRAYER

Jesus, we need you now! With all the challenges we are facing today, we ask that you come and meet us in our time of need. You are the King we need and the only one in whom we can hope. Help me to draw near to you and please bring healing to our world.

Matthew 21:1-17

²¹ When they had approached Jerusalem and had come to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples, ² saying to them, “Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. ³ If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, ‘The Lord has need of them,’ and immediately he will send them.” ⁴ This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

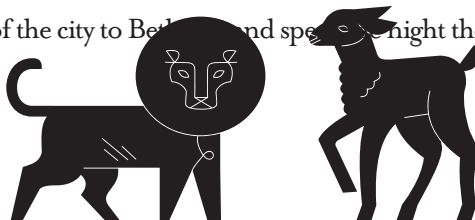
⁵ “SAY TO THE DAUGHTER OF ZION,
‘BEHOLD YOUR KING IS COMING TO YOU,
GENTLE, AND MOUNTED ON A DONKEY,
EVEN ON A COLT, THE FOAL OF A BEAST OF BURDEN.’”

⁶ The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, ⁷ and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. ⁸ Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road. ⁹ The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting,
“Hosanna to the Son of David;
BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD;
Hosanna in the highest!”

¹⁰ When He had entered Jerusalem, all the city was stirred, saying, “Who is this?” ¹¹ And the crowds were saying, “This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth in Galilee.”

¹² And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all those who were buying and selling in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who were selling doves. ¹³ And He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a robbers’ den.”

¹⁴ And the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them. ¹⁵ But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that He had done, and the children who were shouting in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David,” they became indignant ¹⁶ and said to Him, “Do You hear what these children are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies You have prepared praise for Yourself’?” ¹⁷ And He left them and went out of the city to Bethphage and spent the night there.



THE LION'S PEACE

The Roman road from Jericho to Jerusalem is roughly seventeen miles and climbs three thousand feet of elevation. Jesus traveled to Jerusalem many times throughout His life. As a boy He tried to stay near the temple while His parents traveled home north to Nazareth. But this journey up the rocky road is different. Jesus is nearing the end of this earthly mission. He turns to His disciples and gives them instructions...the end begins. "Bring me a donkey," Jesus says, "Here's how to find it, it shouldn't be a problem." Every movement from Jesus makes is perfectly choreographed, like a beautiful, yet tragic dance. The donkey was a symbol of peace. The Jewish people hoped the Messiah would come riding on a victorious steed, yet Jesus rides on a young donkey. Zechariah ^{9.9} pointed to this moment! The King is coming! The fervor of excitement stirs. The people hoped Jesus would clearly present Himself as the King. They run to the road and begin to chant "Hosanna to the Son of David!" In Hebrew Hosanna means "Lord, Save us!" They call to the King! They lay palm branches down, like waving an American flag. The people are ready, but not for this King. Jesus has not come for a military conquest, he has come to bring peace. Peace with God that will require the ultimate sacrifice. He immediately enters the temple and overturns tables of moneychangers who were polluting the worship of God. He heals the blind and the lame, allowing them to enter and worship the Lord. The end begins. He is the King who came to die so many can live in peace with God.

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew ^{21.1-5}. What is significant about Jesus riding in on a donkey?

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Look at Matthew ^{21.6-11}. What did the people expect Jesus to do when he entered the city?

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Jesus turns over the tables to drive people to prayer. Do you have things in your life that Jesus would point to and say, "this is stopping you from fully engaging God in worship?"

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WHAT'S NEXT?

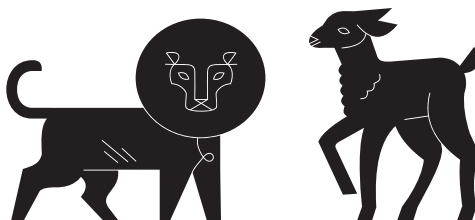
Why did the people misunderstand what Jesus was coming to do? Are there things today that you wish Jesus would do, and find yourself frustrated that he is not doing them?

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If Jesus was cleaning out the temple of your life, what would he desire to "overturn?" How would you respond if he did?

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Jesus came to bring peace with God. That is what we most need, but it is not always what we most want. Spend some time confessing to God what you "want Him to do," then thank Him for what He is currently doing.



PRAYER

Father, give me the humility to submit my life to your direction. Provide the strength I need to walk the path you have laid before me. I know that you do not waste any trial or any triumph in my life, so give me an eternal perspective as I consider my past, present, and future circumstances. Transform me more into the image of your Son, so that I can follow his example of obedience in the face of difficulty.

Matthew 26:17-75

¹⁷ Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?” ¹⁸ And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, “My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.”’” ¹⁹ The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

²⁰ Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. ²¹ As they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” ²² Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?” ²³ And He answered, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. ²⁴ The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.” ²⁵ And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; ²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

³¹ Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’” ³² But after I have been raised, I will go ahead of you to Galilee.” ³³ But Peter said to Him, “Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” ³⁴ Jesus said to him, “Truly I say to you that this very night, before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” ³⁵ Peter said to Him, “Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You.” All the disciples said the same thing too.

³⁶ Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to His disciples, “Sit here while I go over there and pray.” ³⁷ And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and distressed. ³⁸ Then He said to them, “My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death; remain here and keep watch with Me.”

³⁹ And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” ⁴⁰ And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “So, you men could not keep watch with Me for one hour? ⁴¹ Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

⁴² He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, “My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done.” ⁴³ Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. ⁴⁴ And He left them again, and went away and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more. ⁴⁵ Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶ Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!”

⁴⁷ While He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, came up accompanied by a large crowd with swords and clubs, who came from the chief priests and elders of the people.

⁴⁸ Now he who was betraying Him gave them a sign, saying, “Whomever I kiss, He is the one; seize Him.” ⁴⁹ Immediately Judas went to Jesus and said, “Hail, Rabbi!” and kissed Him. ⁵⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you have come for.” Then they came and laid hands on Jesus and seized Him.

⁵¹ And behold, one of those who were with Jesus reached and drew out his sword, and struck the slave of the high priest and cut off his ear. ⁵² Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. ⁵³ Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? ⁵⁴ How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?”

⁵⁵ At that time Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out with swords and clubs to arrest Me as you would against a robber? Every day I used to sit in the temple teaching and you did not seize Me. ⁵⁶ But all this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.

⁵⁷ Those who had seized Jesus led Him away to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were gathered together. ⁵⁸ But Peter was following Him at a distance as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and entered in, and sat down with the officers to see the outcome.

⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole Council kept trying to obtain false testimony against Jesus, so that they might put Him to death. ⁶⁰ They did not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. But later on two came forward, ⁶¹ and said, “This man stated, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’” ⁶² The high priest stood up and said to Him, “Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?”

⁶³ But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴ Jesus said to him, “You have said it

yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶ what do you think?” They answered, “He deserves death!”

⁶⁷ Then they spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him, ⁶⁸ and said, “Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?”

⁶⁹ Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard, and a servant-girl came to him and said, “You too were with Jesus the Galilean.” ⁷⁰ But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you are talking about.” ⁷¹ When he had gone out to the gateway, another servant-girl saw him and said to those who were there, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” ⁷² And again he denied it with an oath, “I do not know the man.” ⁷³ A little later the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Surely you too are one of them; for even the way you talk gives you away.”

⁷⁴ Then he began to curse and swear, “I do not know the man!” And immediately a rooster crowed. ⁷⁵ And Peter remembered the word which Jesus had said, “Before a rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

John 13:1-38

¹³ Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He would depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. ² During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him, ³ Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, ⁴ got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself.

⁵ Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. ⁶ So He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, “Lord, do You wash my feet?” ⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, “What I do you do not realize now, but you will understand hereafter.” ⁸ Peter said to Him, “Never shall You wash my feet!” Jesus answered him, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me.” ⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, “Lord, then wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.” ¹⁰ Jesus said to him, “He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.” ¹¹ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, “Not all of you are clean.”

¹² So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined at the table again, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you? ¹³ You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴ If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. ¹⁵ For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did

to you. ¹⁶ Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷ If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. ¹⁸ I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.' ¹⁹ From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He. ²⁰ Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me."

²¹ When Jesus had said this, He became troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, that one of you will betray Me." ²² The disciples began looking at one another, at a loss to know of which one He was speaking. ²³ There was reclining on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. ²⁴ So Simon Peter gestured to him, and said to him, "Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking." ²⁵ He, leaning back thus on Jesus' bosom, said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus then answered, "That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him." So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷ After the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Therefore Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." ²⁸ Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. ²⁹ For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, "Buy the things we have need of for the feast"; or else, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night.

³¹ Therefore when he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him; ³² if God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and will glorify Him immediately. ³³ Little children, I am with you a little while longer. You will seek Me; and as I said to the Jews, now I also say to you, 'Where I am going, you cannot come.' ³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. ³⁵ By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

³⁶ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered, "Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later." ³⁷ Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You right now? I will lay down my life for You." ³⁸ Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for Me? Truly, truly, I say to you, a rooster will not crow until you deny Me three times."

THE LION'S SUBMISSION

Obedience is difficult when it does not align with our desires. We don't want to be nice to our brother or sister when they are being mean. We don't want to complete a major assignment when it takes time away from our other plans or leisure. We don't want to follow traffic laws when they will make us late to our next appointment. Simply put, the difficulty of obedience is determined by the direction it leads.

When Jesus Christ offered himself up as a sacrifice for humanity's sin, he was performing the greatest act of obedience this world has ever seen. In Matthew ^{26:36-46} we can see that his obedience to his Father's plan was intimidating, to say the least. However, in his moment of being "anguished and distressed" as well as "deeply grieved", Jesus placed his anguish and distress at the Father's feet, affirming that he would put the Father's will above his own worries.

The example of Jesus Christ's obedience is especially convicting as it is presented alongside his disciples' inability to sacrifice their desire for sleep in order to obey Jesus' charge to stay awake and pray. In reading this passage, we cannot help but ask ourselves "how much of my own desires, comforts, or plans am I willing to submit to my God for the sake of obeying his commands?" When obedience requires sacrifice and results in suffering, am I willing to submit?

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew ^{26:17-75}. What actions do you see performed by Peter over the course of this significant night? Where and why do his actions contradict his aspirations?

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What are all the ways you see Jesus sacrifice his own comfort in this passage?

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How do Jesus' interactions with his followers differ from those with his Father?

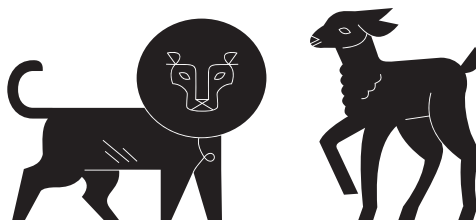
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WHAT'S NEXT?

Spend some time asking God to convict you of what you are currently unwilling to submit under his authority. It could be a role, a relationship, a resource, etc.

Write out the thing(s) God placed upon your heart, and write out a practical way you can submit it to his direction.

Share this plan with someone you trust, and ask that person to follow up with you in one or two weeks to see how your plan is proceeding.



PRAYER

Jesus, increase my faith and take away my fear. Remind me of the hope I have in you, in your life, in your sacrifice, and in your promises. Reveal your strength in my weakness and your power in my need. I want to cling to you in all circumstances, regardless of the dangers that threaten to overwhelm me. You have overcome the world and have provided eternal salvation to all who call on your name. Let me hold fast to this truth so that I may be a bold witness of your Gospel in every situation.

Matthew 27:1-66

²⁷ Now when morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus to put Him to death; ² and they bound Him, and led Him away and delivered Him to Pilate the governor.

³ Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴ saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" ⁵ And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. ⁶ The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." ⁷ And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. ⁸ For this reason that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. ⁹ Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel; ¹⁰ and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me."

¹¹ Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, "Are You the King of the Jews?" And Jesus said to him, "It is as you say." ¹² And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He did not answer. ¹³ Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" ¹⁴ And He did not answer him with regard to even a single charge, so the governor was quite amazed.

¹⁵ Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the people any one prisoner whom they wanted. ¹⁶ At that time they were holding a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas.

¹⁷ So when the people gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" ¹⁸ For he knew that because of envy they had handed Him over.

¹⁹ While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him a message, saying, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man; for last night I suffered greatly in a dream because of Him." ²⁰ But the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to put Jesus to death. ²¹ But the governor said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." ²² Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Crucify Him!" ²³ And he said, "Why, what evil has He done?" But they kept shouting all the more, saying, "Crucify Him!"

²⁴ When Pilate saw that he was accomplishing nothing, but rather that a riot was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd, saying, "I am innocent of this Man's blood; see to that yourselves." ²⁵ And all the people said, "His blood shall be on us and on our children!" ²⁶ Then he released Barabbas for them; but after having Jesus scourged, he handed Him over to be crucified.

²⁷ Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole Roman cohort around Him. ²⁸ They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. ²⁹ And after twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head, and a reed in His right hand; and they knelt down before Him and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" ³⁰ They spat on Him, and took the reed and began to beat Him on the head. ³¹ After they had mocked Him, they took the scarlet robe off Him and put His own garments back on Him, and led Him away to crucify Him.

³² As they were coming out, they found a man of Cyrene named Simon, whom they pressed into service to bear His cross.

³³ And when they came to a place called Golgotha, which means Place of a Skull, ³⁴ they gave Him wine to drink mixed with gall; and after tasting it, He was unwilling to drink.

³⁵ And when they had crucified Him, they divided up His garments among themselves by casting lots. ³⁶ And sitting down, they began to keep watch over Him there. ³⁷ And above His head they put up the charge against Him which read, "THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS."

³⁸ At that time two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left.

³⁹ And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads ⁴⁰ and saying, "You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." ⁴¹ In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, ⁴² "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. ⁴³ He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'" ⁴⁴ The robbers who had been crucified with Him were also insulting Him with the same words.

⁴⁵ Now from the sixth hour darkness fell upon all the land until the ninth hour. ⁴⁶ About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ⁴⁷ And some of those who were standing there, when they heard it, began saying, "This man is calling for Elijah." ⁴⁸ Immediately one of them ran, and taking a sponge, he filled it with sour wine and put it on a reed, and gave Him a drink. ⁴⁹ But the rest of them said, "Let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him." ⁵⁰ And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. ⁵¹ And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.

⁵² The tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; ⁵³ and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many. ⁵⁴ Now the centurion, and those who were with him keeping guard over Jesus, when they saw the earthquake and the things that were happening, became very frightened and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"

⁵⁵ Many women were there looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee while ministering to Him. ⁵⁶ Among them was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

⁵⁷ When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. ⁵⁸ This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. ⁵⁹ And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, ⁶⁰ and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the entrance of the tomb and went away. ⁶¹ And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the grave.

⁶² Now on the next day, the day after the preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered together with Pilate, ⁶³ and said, “Sir, we remember that when He was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I am to rise again.’ ⁶⁴ Therefore, give orders for the grave to be made secure until the third day, otherwise His disciples may come and steal Him away and say to the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last deception will be worse than the first.” ⁶⁵ Pilate said to them, “You have a guard; go, make it as secure as you know how.” ⁶⁶ And they went and made the grave secure, and along with the guard they set a seal on the stone.

John 19:1-37

¹⁹ Pilate then took Jesus and scourged Him. ² And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and put a purple robe on Him; ³ and they began to come up to Him and say, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and to give Him slaps in the face. ⁴ Pilate came out again and said to them, “Behold, I am bringing Him out to you so that you may know that I find no guilt in Him.” ⁵ Jesus then came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, “Behold, the Man!” ⁶ So when the chief priests and the officers saw Him, they cried out saying, “Crucify, crucify!” Pilate said to them, “Take Him yourselves and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him.” ⁷ The Jews answered him, “We have a law, and by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God.”

⁸ Therefore when Pilate heard this statement, he was even more afraid; ⁹ and he entered into the Praetorium again and said to Jesus, “Where are You from?” But Jesus gave him no answer.

¹⁰ So Pilate said to Him, “You do not speak to me? Do You not know that I have authority to release You, and I have authority to crucify You?” ¹¹ Jesus answered, “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.” ¹² As a result of this Pilate made efforts to release Him, but the Jews cried out saying, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; everyone who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

¹³ Therefore when Pilate heard these words, he brought Jesus out, and sat down on the judgment seat at a place called The Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. ¹⁴ Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” ¹⁵ So they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him, crucify Him!” Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?” The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar.”

¹⁶ So he then handed Him over to them to be crucified.

¹⁷ They took Jesus, therefore, and He went out, bearing His own cross, to the place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha. ¹⁸ There they crucified Him, and with Him two other men, one on either side, and Jesus in between. ¹⁹ Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the cross. It was written, “JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS.” ²⁰ Therefore many of the Jews read this inscription, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Latin and in Greek. ²¹ So the chief priests of the Jews were saying to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews’; but that He said, ‘I am King of the Jews.’” ²² Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

²³ Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. ²⁴ So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose

it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture: “THEY DIVIDED MY OUTER GARMENTS AMONG THEM, AND FOR MY CLOTHING THEY CAST LOTS.” ²⁵ Therefore the soldiers did these things. But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus then saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” ²⁷ Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” From that hour the disciple took her into his own household.

²⁸ After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” ²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

³¹ Then the Jews, because it was the day of preparation, so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. ³² So the soldiers came, and broke the legs of the first man and of the other who was crucified with Him; ³³ but coming to Jesus, when they saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. ³⁴ But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. ³⁵ And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe. ³⁶ For these things came to pass to fulfill the Scripture, “NOT A BONE OF HIM SHALL BE BROKEN.” ³⁷ And again another Scripture says, “THEY SHALL LOOK ON HIM WHOM THEY PIERCED.”

THE LAMB’S SACRIFICE

Everyone loves a good underdog story. We appreciate the excitement of watching a seemingly certain defeat turned into a surprising victory. We want to see heroes overcome villains, relationships overcome adversity, and bottom ranked sports teams overcome top ranked dynasties. The drama of unexpected triumph is simply more enjoyable to witness than the unfolding of a guaranteed outcome. And it seems our appreciation for this type of story is inherited from our heavenly Father, because his ultimate victory over sin and death through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ displays quite the dramatic flair.

Just when it appeared that the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth was over in the absolute defeat of a shameful death on a cross; just when his friends and enemies alike assumed that the story was over; just when the hope of the promised messiah seemed lost; just three days after the tomb was closed, God overcame the overwhelming darkness with marvelous light. And yet, the betrayal, false trial, and unjust murder of Jesus Christ still felt like a resounding defeat for his followers in the moment. They were overwhelmed with fear and despair, to the point of running and hiding from those who had presumably destroyed their leader.

We still find ourselves in those moments. The moment when we fear God simply does not have our best at heart. The moment when we assume our Father simply must not see us or else he would change our circumstances. The moment when we run and hide from the threats that seem insurmountable and the defeat that seems imminent. But when we look to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, we can take confidence in the truth that our God can turn a “certain defeat” into a surprising, resounding, ultimate victory.

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew 27. How do different people respond to the betrayal, trial, crucifixion, and burial of Jesus Christ?

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What miraculous signs followed the death of Jesus Christ? Why are these significant?

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Who clearly remembered Jesus' promise of resurrection? Why is this significant?

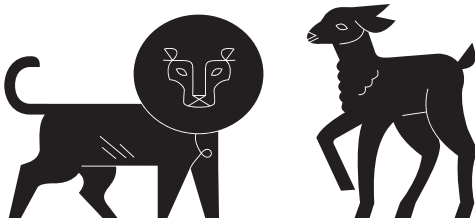
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WHAT'S NEXT?

Spend some time confessing to God where you feel overwhelmed or defeated.

Write out the area(s) from your confession, and go down the list speaking aloud how God is in control of those situations and why you know this to be true. Look up passages about the power and compassion of the Lord to ground your knowledge in Biblical truth.

Spend some time thanking God for the gift of salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Praise him for what he has done!



PRAYER

Jesus you are victorious! You have overcome everything through your death on the cross! Though there are many things in my life to worry about or be confused over, help me celebrate this great day! You overcame death and the grave! We can have eternal hope because of you.

Matthew 28.1-10

Now after the Sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to look at the grave. ² And behold, a severe earthquake had occurred, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled away the stone and sat upon it. ³ And his appearance was like lightning, and his clothing as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook for fear of him and became like dead men. ⁵ The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said. Come, see the place where He was lying. ⁷ Go quickly and tell His disciples that He has risen from the dead; and behold, He is going ahead of you into Galilee, there you will see Him; behold, I have told you.”

⁸ And they left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy and ran to report it to His disciples.

⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus *said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and take word to My brethren to leave for Galilee, and there they will see Me.”

THE LION ROARS

Every great movie ends in a great victory! In the Lion King, Simba comes back to the Pride-Lands. In the Lord of the Rings, Frodo throws the ring into Mount Doom. We want the hero to win! We long for a bright ray of hope! We want to see hope and peace restored after pain and tragedy. Jesus' resurrection points to the truth that death is real, but not final. Life can be painful, but the pain is not permanent. Friday was dark, but Sunday arrived in glorious light. Matthew ²⁸.³ says Jesus' “appearance was like lightning!” He dressed up for the occasion! No more hiding behind the rags of a common man, His true colors shine bright! The glorious God-man, Jesus Christ rose from the dead! He lives, so we also can live! His resurrection demonstrates His power over death and His forgiveness of sins. Jesus fully restores Hope and Peace! No greater way, no greater day! The Lion of Judah roars victoriously!

LOOK IN THE WORD

Look at Matthew 28.1-4. What surprises you about Jesus' resurrection?

|

Why do the disciples fear? Why does Jesus constantly say, “do not be afraid?”



WHAT'S NEXT?

Jesus comforts His disciples through this section. How does knowing that Jesus rose bring comfort to you?



The resurrection shows that Jesus restores hope and peace with God! What can you do today to encourage someone with this truth?



Go Celebrate!

