

Name: _____

GRATITUDE AND SERMON JOURNAL

**Helping Others
Follow Jesus**

January 27 - April 26, 2020

Dear Church,

The purpose of this “Gratitude and Sermon Journal” is to help us connect with the Lord through daily prayer and study. Furthermore, we want to help connect others to the church. The daily readings support the Sunday sermon. (The reading on Monday is the sermon text for the following Sunday). I’m pleased that some of our groups, including Discipleship Communities and prayer groups, use this journal to talk about the texts and the preaching on Sunday morning.

Asbury is deeply rooted in our “ancient” traditions (scripture and the church) while also being focused upon what is happening today and will happen in the future. If we lose touch with our past, we have no guidance. If we fail to have an application, then we become “rear view mirror” people. This Gratitude and Sermon Journal looks back at Scripture and the teaching of the church while looking forward to the Lord to discern His will for us.

Tom

Consider using this journal not only for yourself, but also as an opportunity to meet with others in a small group. The Christian faith is about making disciples of Jesus. This journal provides a mutually blessed way for you to do precisely that. Below are some questions your small group may use for discussion each week.

Weekly Small Group Reflection Questions:

- Review the key scripture(s).
- Review the key point(s) from the sermon.
 - How were you encouraged?
 - How were you challenged?
 - What questions did it create?
 - What convictions did it bring?
- What was the pastor asking of you, even expecting you to do in response?

Scripture Readings

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

FROM LOFTY THRONE TO LOWLY MANGER

- 1/27 Luke 2:8-20
- 1/28 Luke 2:39-52
- 1/29 Proverbs 15:33; 18:12
- 1/30 Ephesians 4:1-7
- 1/31 Philippians 2:1-11
- 2/1 James 4:1-12
- 2/2 Luke 2:8-20

COME! FISH ON MY TEAM

- 2/3 Luke 5:1-11
- 2/4 Luke 9:18-27
- 2/5 Luke 9:51-62
- 2/6 Luke 8:19-39
- 2/7 John 21:15-19
- 2/8 John 21:20-25
- 2/9 Luke 5:1-11

SEE, YOU ARE ALL WELL!

- 2/10 John 5:1-17
- 2/11 Mark 10:13-16
- 2/12 Ephesians 4:25-32
- 2/13 Philippians 4:13-20
- 2/14 I Corinthians 13:4-7
- 2/15 2 Timothy 2:22-26
- 2/16 John 5:1-17

FRUIT, GIFTS AND POWER

- 2/17 John 14:15-31
- 2/18 Joel 2:28-32; John 7:37-39
- 2/19 John 15:18-27
- 2/20 John 16:4-15
- 2/21 Acts 1:1-11
- 2/22 Acts 2
- 2/23 John 14:15-31

QUOTING DEUTERONOMY TO THE DEVIL

- 2/24 Luke 22:39-46
- 2/25 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- 2/26 Matthew 4:1-11

TURNING THE TABLES

- 2/27 Ecclesiastes 3:1-8
- 2/28 Malachi 3:1-4
- 2/29 James 1:19-25
- 3/1 Matthew 21:12-17

NOT SO WITH YOU

- 3/2 Mark 10:35-45
- 3/3 Matthew 12:15-21
- 3/4 Romans 12:3-8
- 3/5 Romans 16:17-20
- 3/6 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
- 3/7 Galatians 5:13-15
- 3/8 Mark 10:35-45

THEY MARVELED...

- 3/9 John 4:27-42
- 3/10 John 4:1-15
- 3/11 John 4:16-26
- 3/12 John 8:1-11
- 3/13 John 8:31-38
- 3/14 Romans 8:31-39
- 3/15 John 4:27-42

Scripture Readings

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

GUESS WHO'S COMING FOR DINNER?

- 3/16 Luke 19:1-10
- 3/17 Luke 15:1-10
- 3/18 Acts 9:1-22
- 3/19 Romans 6:20-23
- 3/20 1 Timothy 1:12-17
- 3/21 1 Peter 3:13-17
- 3/22 Luke 19:1-10

SEE HOW HE LOVED HIM

- 3/23 John 11:28-37
- 3/24 John 11:1-16
- 3/25 John 11:17-27
- 3/26 John 11:38-44
- 3/27 John 11:45-57
- 3/28 Hebrews 2:14-18
- 3/29 John 11:28-37

YOU SAY I AM A KING

- 3/30 John 18:28-40
- 3/31 Matthew 21:1-11
- 4/1 Matthew 16:13-28
- 4/2 John 5:30-46
- 4/3 John 6:60-71
- 4/4 1 John 5:13-15
- 4/5 John 18:28-40

ALPHA AND OMEGA

- 4/6 Revelation 1:4-8
- 4/7 Isaiah 44:6-8
- 4/8 Matthew 26:1-16
- 4/9 John 13:1-30
- 4/10 John 18:1-27
- 4/11 Matthew 27:45-66
- 4/12 Revelation 1:4-8

EYE-OPENING

- 4/13 Luke 24:13-35
- 4/14 1 Corinthians 15:3-11
- 4/15 Hebrews 1:1-4
- 4/16 Hebrews 4:11-16
- 4/17 2 Timothy 3:10-17
- 4/18 2 Peter 1:16-21
- 4/19 Luke 24:13-35

MIND-OPENING

- 4/20 Luke 24:36-53
- 4/21 Acts 8:26-40
- 4/22 Acts 13:13-43
- 4/23 Acts 17:1-15
- 4/24 Acts 18:24-28
- 4/25 Romans 1:1-7
- 4/26 Luke 24:36-53

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

January 27 - April 26, 2020

Helping Others Follow Jesus

Maybe the hardest thing about being a pastor is the frustration when people who claim to be Christians are unable to understand the foundation of our faith. Christianity is about Jesus. It is not about following rules (or living without rules). It is not a self-improvement course. God does not grade on a curve. Our self-absorbed ways always begin with “*I, me, mine, myself.*”

Being a Christian is about a relationship with Jesus Christ. How does that happen?

1. God created us. He loves us. God came to redeem us by entering our world as a human being—Jesus. Jesus lived a perfect life, died on a cross for our salvation, was resurrected from the dead, ascended to heaven, gave us the Holy Spirit, created the Church, promised to return and to take us to heaven. God took the initiative. We are totally lost in every capacity without God’s activity.
2. This has nothing to do with ME. I can’t save myself. Only Jesus can save. And Jesus DOES save. But I must TRUST in Him. Trusting is not merely an intellectual assent—it means to cling to and to rely upon. When I went skydiving, I contributed nothing to my safe arrival on the ground other than cooperating with “Stooby.” He was my skydiving savior. He did all the work for me. My role? Cling to him.
3. Jesus loves me enough not to leave me as I am (merely a forgiven sinner), but to work in my life to help me be more like Him. Furthermore, Asbury’s mission statement is, “*Helping Others Follow Jesus.*” It is impossible to do this unless WE follow Jesus ourselves.

Over the next 13 weeks we will study of the character of Jesus. We have no other message than Jesus. To follow Jesus, we should study HIM. Learning facts or Bible trivia does not change who we are. Our ultimate purpose is to love and be like Jesus; and to influence others to do the same.

FROM LOFTY THRONE TO LOWLY MANGER

Monday, January 27, 2020

Luke 2:8-20

The “incarnation” means God became human flesh in the Person of Jesus. I repeat: GOD BECAME HUMAN. This is such a startling truth that I have difficulty comprehending it. This is the same Christ at the center of the worship scene in Revelation 5. I love Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase in *The Message*: “*The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.*” (John 1:14) God “*moved into our neighborhood*” because God loves us and wants us to have light, not darkness; and eternal life, not death. Jesus came to show who we can be and how we can live. Everything about Jesus’ life illustrates His confident humility. His birth narrative (Nazareth, Bethlehem, shepherds, farm animals, a manger, etc.), His life (this King did not even have a home), His ministry (often to the outcasts of society) and His death (utter abuse and abandonment) all speak to confident humility. Followers of Jesus should exhibit this trait, too. Humility can bring out the best in others—and the worst. Humility repulses some people. Jesus won the hearts of some soldiers and one thief on the cross; but others crucified and reviled Him. Some wise men worshipped; but not King Herod. Eleven disciples were committed to His team; but not Judas.

In his book, “Humilitas,” John Dickson defines humility as, “*The noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself. More simply, you could say the humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service to others.*” He notes that humility: 1. Assumes your dignity and strength 2. Is a choice you make (otherwise it is humiliation) 3. Is social. It is redirecting your power for the sake of others, not yourself. Confident humility is one of Asbury’s core staff behaviors.

APPLICATION: How does the definition above help you better understand the character of Jesus? Why is confident humility an attractive trait in a leader? Who do you know who models confident humility? What does confident humility mean in your context? (Really think this through.)

CONFIDENT HUMILITY

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Tuesday, January 28, 2020

Luke 2:39-52

- 1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
- 2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
- 3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, February 3, 2020

Luke 5:1-11

Jesus recruited, trained and deployed a team of followers. Interestingly, Judas Iscariot was the only disciple with an impressive resume. Jesus was committed to His disciples. He spent time with them. He traveled, prayed, listened, taught and ate with them. He had a mission to accomplish, but it would become their mission to fulfill. Jesus asked them to make life-changing commitments. Following Jesus was meaningful and significant. They saw healings and miracles over nature. They heard messages of depth and power. They felt the excitement of being part of something bigger than themselves. Following Jesus was also hard. Martyrdom resulted. Yet, they thought following Jesus was worth their lives. Jesus introduced the kingdom of heaven to them. Heaven trumps anything materialism can offer.

Asbury's staff core behaviors are: *confident humility, committed team player and genuine kindness.*

To truly follow Jesus means we are committed to be on His team first (Matthew 6:33). This disrupts our routine. Following Jesus reorganizes our priorities. It affects our friendships and how we spend our time and money. Following Jesus means we must love God, our neighbor and our enemies.

APPLICATION: How does thinking of Jesus as committed to His team of disciples help you better understand His character? Who do you know who is truly a committed team player? How committed are you to being on Jesus' team of disciples? What does this look like for you? What other team or teams do you play on (family, work, church) and HOW do you play?

COMMITTED TEAM PLAYER

COME! FISH ON MY TEAM

Tuesday, February 4, 2020

Luke 9:18-27

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

COMMITTED TEAM PLAYER

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

Luke 9:51-62

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Friday, February 7, 2020
John 21:15-19

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

COMMITTED TEAM PLAYER

COME! FISH ON MY TEAM

Saturday, February 8, 2020

John 21:20-25

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

COMMITTED TEAM PLAYER

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS
Sunday, February 9, 2020
Luke 5:1-11

Sermon Notes:

SEE, YOU ARE WELL!

Monday, February 10, 2020

John 5:1-17

Genuine kindness is the third leg of Asbury's staff core behaviors. Since Jesus called all His followers to serve, we think these core behaviors transcend employment. Asbury's membership vows state: *"I will be loyal to Jesus Christ expressed through Asbury and will uphold it by my prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness."*

"Genuine" means "honest, open, sincere, unpretentious, real, authentic, true, valid and legitimate." It is the opposite of fake, false and deceptive. "Genuine" is what Jesus spotted in Nathanael: *"Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!"* (John 1:47)

Paul Coughlin's book, "No More Christian Nice Guy," has an interesting subtitle: "When Being Nice - Instead of Good - Hurts Men, Women and Children." In reading the Gospel of John, I was struck by how often Jesus asked hard questions. He wasn't always "nice." He didn't pat people on the head and say, *"Stay the way you are, and you'll go far."* Jesus was honest. He asked uncomfortable and awkward questions that put people on the spot. He was bold. He confronted. He was direct. He asked people to make decisions. "Nice" people tend to be pleasers. Nice people enable. "Kind" people don't avoid conflict or skirt controversy. Being kind means being thoughtful, generous, considerate, concerned, sensitive and affectionate. Kindness cares about the well-being of the other person. Kindness cares enough to listen, to be interested and to pay attention. Sure, there's a time to be nice, but there is also a time to ask the hard questions. Kindness tells the truth.

The most religious people in the community were often the recipients of Jesus' sharpest critique because their hearts were hardened to the Lord and to others (John 5:9b-17). Jesus was never mean, but love compelled Him to speak the truth to people.

APPLICATION: How does today's scripture reading reframe genuine kindness for you? How does it help you better understand the character of Jesus? Do you think of God as being kind? Why or why not? Who do you know who embodies genuine kindness? In what ways do you need to stop being nice and start being kind? What is your biggest obstacle to this?

GENUINE KINDNESS

SEE, YOU ARE WELL!

Wednesday, February 12, 2020
Ephesians 4:25-32

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Thursday, February 13, 2020

Philippians 4:13-20

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

SEE, YOU ARE WELL!

Friday, February 14, 2020
I Corinthians 13:4-7

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS
Saturday, February 15, 2020
2 Timothy 2:22-26

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, February 17, 2020

John 14:15-31

The concept of God as Spirit makes sense. God the Father is Spirit, not flesh and blood. The New Testament is clear that God the Son became a human in Jesus. The Christmas message, God become Man, is inconceivable to me. Yet, that is what God the Son did. The third Person of the Trinity is the Holy Spirit. Of the three parts of the godhead, the Holy Spirit is the least understood for most of us.

Jesus was led and empowered by the Holy Spirit. To follow Jesus, we must have His Spirit in us (else we attempt it on our own strength). Jesus tried to explain to His disciples that the Holy Spirit would be given to them after He left. It would be to their advantage that He go away so they would not be dependent upon His physical presence. By giving the Spirit to them, He could live within all disciples simultaneously. The Holy Spirit was given on the "Day of Pentecost" (Acts 2). The Day of Pentecost was the birth of the Church. All Christians have received the Holy Spirit (otherwise, you are not a Christian).

There are at least three effects of the Holy Spirit on us. First, the Spirit is for individual believers (Galatians 5:22-23). Second, the Spirit imparts gifts for the church (1 Corinthians 12:4-11). Third, the Spirit empowers us for witness (Acts 1:8). Witness, empowerment and mission are the main topics of the Book of Acts.

Our readings this week focus on Jesus' teaching and the first two chapters in the Book of Acts.

APPLICATION: According to today's scripture reading, how does the Holy Spirit help us? In what ways does He affect your life? How are you being empowered by the Holy Spirit to help others follow Jesus?

HIS SPIRIT

FRUIT, GIFTS AND POWER

Tuesday, February 18, 2020

Joel 2:28-32; John 7:37-39

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HIS SPIRIT

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

John 15:18-27

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

FRUIT, GIFTS AND POWER

Thursday, February 20, 2020

John 16:4-15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Friday, February 21, 2020

Acts 1:1-11

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

FRUIT, GIFTS AND POWER

Saturday, February 22, 2020

Acts 2

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS
Sunday, February 23, 2020
John 14:15-31

Sermon Notes:

QUOTING DEUTERONOMY TO THE DEVIL

Monday, February 24, 2020

Luke 22:39-46

An area about 15x35 miles situated between Jericho and the Dead Sea “wilderness” is called “The Devastation.” It is a sparsely populated wasteland. It has blistering heat and little vegetation. The Holy Spirit led Jesus into this remote and isolated region where the devil tempted Jesus to indulge Himself, to draw a crowd through sensationalism, and to compromise His standards. Jesus didn’t take any shortcuts, *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”* (Hebrews 4:15) Jesus responded to the devil with the truth of scripture (quoting from Deuteronomy). The writer of Hebrews also says, *“For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.”* (Hebrews 2:18) Jesus knows what temptation is, He intercedes for us and helps us through the power of His Holy Spirit.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of the season of Lent (it concludes on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter). Sometimes we need self-restraint. At other times, we need to be resilient. Resilience is defined by Dr. Meg Jay as *“adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.”* When we draw strength from struggle and hardship, it can lead to success later in life. Lent is a time to engage in spiritual disciplines. It can be a time to say “No!” to some things while also saying “Yes!” to others. Lent is a time of preparation and strengthening.

APPLICATION: What things would the Lord have you shed, either permanently or temporarily? What things would the Lord have you add to your life? Consider how you are responding to our membership vows, *“Prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness.”* Consider fellowship with other believers for Bible study and prayer. Make worship THE priority during Lent, missing only for a reason you know God would approve.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Tuesday, February 25, 2020

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Thursday, February 27, 2020

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Jesus was angry. He was furious when the religious leaders were ripping off worshipers. There IS a time to be angry. It has been called “righteous indignation.” Jesus didn’t sit on His emotions. He did not look the other way. He acted. Jesus didn’t make a big deal over trivial matters—this was a big deal. In turn, when the chief priests and scribes became indignant that Jesus was receiving praise, Jesus defended the actions of His worshipers. Once again, He referenced the truth of Scripture (Matthew 21:15-16, citing Psalm 8:2). Assertiveness is understood as behaving confidently and not being afraid to say what you want, need or believe. Jesus was (and is) His own man. He knew who He was, and He was comfortable asserting Himself when necessary. Ecclesiastes 3 tells us there is a time for everything, including “*a time to keep silence and a time to speak.*”

APPLICATION: What does today’s scripture reading tell you about the character of Jesus? Why do you think people commonly depict Jesus as being passive and weak? How do you handle your anger? Conversely, are you able to regulate your behavior and respond in appropriate ways? Are there areas in life where you are being run over by others and need to assert yourself? If this is difficult for you, remember you have the Helper (the Holy Spirit), the example of Jesus and other followers to help you learn to be self-regulated and responsible..

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, March 2, 2020

Mark 10:35-45

Our passage from Mark 10 is stunning. The audacity of James and John (Matthew's Gospel has their momma asking for this favor) to request being seated at the right and left hand in *your* (wink, wink) *glory*. They were after their OWN glory, not the glory of Jesus. We hear Jesus' gentle rebuke, but I would have loved to have seen His expression (exasperation?) when they popped the question. It didn't go over well when the other disciples heard of the request ("indignant," is the word). They were probably upset because they hadn't thought of it first. They all wanted to run their own play and call their own number. Jesus had to get His team back together. His punch line is that He didn't come to be served but to give His life away.

Our natural bias is to organize life so we can be comfortable. We like to come first. We prefer the kingdom of self. Jesus ushered in a new kingdom—the kingdom of God. Let's not throw rocks: We are all building our own kingdoms until we turn to the kingdom of God. Jesus spoke more about the kingdom of God than He did about anything else (money was his second favorite topic). Some of us are more scripted into service and helping than others. Some of us are givers and some are takers. Regardless of our natural disposition, we are all called to serve and to do it in the spirit of Jesus. He served with confident humility.

APPLICATION: What does this passage tell you about Jesus' character? How does the study of His character so far, help you understand this concept of servant leadership? Which comes first? Leading or serving? How, who, where and why are you serving? Find a place that is meaningful to you and to others.

SERVANT-LEADER

Thursday, March 5, 2020

Romans 16:17-20

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

NOT SO WITH YOU

Saturday, March 7, 2020

Galatians 5:13-15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

SERVANT-LEADER

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS
Sunday, March 8, 2020
Mark 10:35-45

Sermon Notes:

THEY MARVELED...

Monday, March 9, 2020

John 4:27-42

The “Woman at the Well” was an unbelievable story to people in the days of Jesus. It freaked out His disciples. In fact, they marveled that He would talk to this woman (but no one questioned Him about it). It was wrong on numerous levels. She is a Samaritan and the Jews hated Samaritans. “The Good Samaritan” was an oxymoron—the only “good” Samaritan would have been a dead Samaritan according to the conventional wisdom of the day. The Samaritans were Jews who fell away from following the true God and worshipped false gods when the Assyrians conquered and intermarried with several of their tribes (in 722 BC). Jews often refused to travel through Samaria (north of Jerusalem). Jesus was crossing another taboo when He spoke to a woman. To have a public conversation with a woman would have been improper then. Furthermore, she was a woman with a sexual history. That is why she was drawing water in the heat of the day—NOBODY would want to be seen with her. She was despised. Her reputation was loathsome.

Jesus spoke to the “wrong” people. He ate and drank with them, too. He didn’t kiss up to the proper folks. He boldly took risks. He believed that every person had sacred worth and was worthy of being loved, accepted and forgiven. He never compromised His message. He said certain things were right and certain things were wrong. While Jesus used judgment, He didn’t condemn people. He told them the truth and invited them to follow Him, regardless of their past. He invited them to be freed from sin.

APPLICATION: Consider Jesus’ inclusive nature after reading all of John 4 this week. How are you doing with people outside the faith? How easily are you shocked or offended by what people do or have done? As a recipient of God’s kindness, are you stingy with it or do you relish sharing it with abundance? Are you able to include others in God’s love despite their behavior? For whom have you prayed to receive God’s love and grace? Who have you made smile today?

INCLUSIVE

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Tuesday, March 10, 2020

John 4:1-15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

THEY MARVELED...

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

John 4:16-26

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Thursday, March 12, 2020

John 8:1-11

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

THEY MARVELED...

Friday, March 13, 2020

John 8:31-38

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, March 16, 2020

Luke 19:1-10

This is another story of Jesus reaching out to embrace people who were considered “beyond” salvation. Like the Samaritan woman at the well, Zacchaeus had flown past cultural values. He lined his pockets by helping finance the Roman occupation of Israel. He collected taxes (profit gouging) from his fellow Jews to bankroll the despised Roman oppressors. These Jews had no recourse against Zacchaeus. He could tell you to shut up and pay Rome and if you didn’t, he could turn you over to them for retribution. To say the Jews hated Zacchaeus and his fellow tax collectors is a classic understatement. Zacchaeus didn’t respect them, so they didn’t respect him, either.

Jesus loves ALL people. He gave prostitutes, tax collectors and murderers an invitation to a new life. He even offered forgiveness to a thief dying with Him on the cross. The undeserved favor of Jesus is called “grace.” NOBODY is perfect. We are ALL sinners. We all miss the mark. We must not deny grace to anyone. Jesus respects all people because all people are created in the image of God. Jesus chose to give respect to Zacchaeus. The chief tax collector didn’t have to earn Jesus’ respect, but He responded to it.

Zacchaeus was “up the tree” in more ways than one. He wanted something more from life than a successful business. It is amazing how Jesus could spot this guy who had come up so short in the community. It is so like Jesus. He always had an eye out for the outcast.

APPLICATION: It is one of the most difficult things in the Christian faith to “love the sinner while hating the sin.” Jesus did not condone Zacchaeus’ behavior, but He did not condemn him as a person. Everyone needs a Zacchaeus in life, someone who challenges us to be like Jesus when it isn’t easy. Do you have a Zacchaeus? Are you a Zacchaeus? Do you need to forgive? Do you need to be forgiven? Jesus wants to bring healing and salvation to all people—even the outcasts. Treating others with respect is one way we Help Others Follow Jesus.

RESPECT

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Wednesday, March 18, 2020

Acts 9:1-22

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Friday, March 20, 2020

1 Timothy 1:12-17

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

SEE HOW HE LOVED HIM

Monday, March 23, 2020

John 11:28-37

We will read John 11 this week. The raising of Lazarus is one of the greatest stories in the New Testament. Men who have been dead for four days don't come walking out of a tomb. There is so much to talk about in this story, but I want to focus on the compassion Jesus showed for Mary. Compassion comes from the Latin word "compati" that means, "to suffer with." Jesus had the ability to relate to someone else's story and have concern for their suffering. Devastated by the death of her brother, Mary could not understand why Jesus had been a no-show with them at their greatest time of need. Jesus' delay served a Kingdom purpose, but He still had compassion for His friends in their suffering.

I love how Paul wrote, "*For now we see in a mirror dimly...*" (1 Corinthians 13:12) The mirrors of his day were greatly inferior to ours—they didn't provide clarity. He made the point that we have limitations in our understanding of life. We tend to want the immediate, quick fix. We abhor the concept of suffering, inconvenience or pain. It is often in the trials of life where we find God showing up in surprising and unexpected ways to deepen our faith and to help us mature.

APPLICATION: Can you relate to Mary in her pain and sorrow? When have you felt overlooked, ignored or confused? When have you been hurt because someone (maybe even God) didn't show up when you thought He should? How willing are you listen to others when they are hurting? (I like the title of a book I just bought: "Shut Up and Listen!") Jesus treated people in a way that communicated, "*You're important. What you're going through matters to me. I care about you.*" This is what Jesus did. This is NOT about solving people's problems. It is about compassionately sharing in their suffering. Asbury has "Stephen Ministers" who are trained to be sympathetic listeners. Call our front office at 918-492-1771 if you need to request one.

COMPASSION

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, March 30, 2020

John 18:28-40

While the Palm Sunday story is in our readings this week, we will focus on something else that happened during “Holy Week.” After His arrest in Gethsemane, Jesus was brought into Pontius Pilate’s courtroom. Pilate clearly wanted to have nothing to do with this silly Jewish dispute. The Jews exasperated Pilate. He preferred being in Caesarea by the Sea rather than in contentious Jerusalem. His wife had even warned him about not messing with Jesus because she had a dream about Jesus being a righteous man (Matthew 27:19).

Jesus has so many virtues, but we must not overlook the fact that while He is humble, He exudes confidence. The last paragraph of the “Sermon on the Mount” ends with the observation that Jesus didn’t teach like the scribes; He taught with authority (Matthew 7:28-29). He was confident enough to be a king who rode a donkey; to stoop to wash the feet of His disciples; to deal with the emotions of Mary; to speak to crowds of thousands of people; to deal with His critics; and to offer grace to those who left or betrayed Him. He never changed Himself to please people. He didn’t have to impress, brag or show off.

It is interesting that the word “confidence,” which appears in the New Testament 22 times, never appears in the gospels. “Confidence” is always linked to something we have as Christians because of the Lord. But when I read Jesus’ confrontation with Pilate, I see an enormously confident man. I’m not talking about Pilate. Ironically, Jesus was the calm one in the interaction. Unlike Pilate, Jesus knew who He was and could self-differentiate from the hostile environment and the threats. His followers had abandoned Him and left Him alone. But make no mistake—Jesus, in chains, was still the boss. Jesus had emotions and feelings, but His decisions were based on logic (truth). While we are not Jesus, Jesus is in us through His Spirit.

APPLICATION: Confidence is enormously attractive. Jesus gives us great confidence (2 Corinthians 3:4-6). Do a word study on “confidence.” The New Testament emphasizes our confidence is in the Lord, not in ourselves. It’s an obvious question: “How confident are you?” The follow up question is: “Is your confidence in the Lord?” We gain confidence in the Lord by daily putting our trust in Him.

CONFIDENCE

Monday, April 6, 2020

Revelation 1:4-8

“Alpha” is the first letter in the Greek language and “Omega” is the last. John was not discussing the Greek alphabet but used a metaphor to describe that Jesus is the beginning and the end. We started this series looking at how God became a human being in Jesus. That goes beyond our alphabet. In Dr. Seuss’ book, “On Beyond Zebra,” he spoke of how we understood our alphabet, but asked what if there were letters beyond our imagination? *“If you think the alphabet stops with Z, you are wrong. Conrad Cornelius O’Donald O’Dell creates an entirely new alphabet beyond Z! You can stop, if you want, with the Z, because most people stop with the Z, but not me.”*

Jesus is “Beyond Zebra,” too. He created a whole new vocabulary and way of life. He is utterly unique. Moses and Mohammed founded religions, but they were merely human. They were not incarnated gods or resurrected lords.

The Christian faith rises and falls on the Resurrection. If Jesus is just another dead messiah, then let’s all go home. There’s no reason to follow Him. However, everything is changed if the Resurrection is true. Peter, the disciple who denied Jesus, was forgiven and filled with the Holy Spirit. This cowardly disciple was empowered and transformed. He spoke with boldness: *“And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”* (Acts 4:12) Peter no longer feared what others might do to him—he was a new man.

APPLICATION: When Jesus is in our lives, we begin to be transformed. A new life has begun. It’s a fresh start. Have you allowed Jesus’ new language to enter your heart? He is willing and able to receive you today. Today is the day to give yourself back to the One who loves you. *“Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me just as I am. Thank You for coming to earth so I might find Your love. I turn from my self-absorbed ways and ask You to forgive me. Come into my life. Hear my prayer this day as I give myself back to You. I want to follow Jesus. In Jesus Name. Amen.”*

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Tuesday, April 7, 2020

Isaiah 44:6-8

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

Wednesday, April 8, 2020

Matthew 26:1-16

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Thursday, April 9, 2020

John 13:1-30

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

ALPHA AND OMEGA

Friday, April 10, 2020
John 18:1-27

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Saturday, April 11, 2020

Matthew 27:45-66

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

THE RESURRECTED LORD

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Monday, April 13, 2020

Luke 24:13-35

The Bible is a book about real people and real stories. Something incredible started happening after the Resurrection. Jesus started appearing to people in all kinds of places and situations. His bodily presence demonstrated He was physically alive and present. The gospels have various accounts of these post-resurrection appearances. Luke goes into detail about Jesus appearing to two disciples who were walking on the road to a village named “Emmaus.” Luke says their “eyes were kept from recognizing him.” Jesus spoke to them, beginning with Moses and the prophets, and explained the Scriptures and how they all pointed to Himself. They were crushed by the crucifixion and confused by the post-resurrection appearances they were hearing about. Jesus opened their eyes.

The Old Testament (or Hebrew Bible) are “the Scriptures” Jesus described. The New Testament had not been written yet. These Scriptures pointed to Jesus. All the stories of the Old Testament culminate in the Resurrection of Jesus. The Old Testament becomes a new book when we look for Christ in all of it.

There are many troubling and confusing parts in the Hebrew Bible (names, places, violence, warfare, dietary laws, etc.) but it is only the first act of a two-part play. Without the Old, the New is without foundation and doesn’t make sense. Without the New, the Old is incomplete. The last word in the Old Testament is “destruction” (or “curse”). The last sentence of the New Testament is: “*The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all. Amen.*” (Revelation 22:21) I’ll take the grace of Jesus over “destruction/curse” any day.

APPLICATION: Our daily readings are New Testament verses emphasizing the authority of the Old Testament. Jesus, Peter and Paul appealed to it. Methodism’s founder, John Wesley, prioritized Scripture when he said, “*I am a man of one book.*” How often do you study Scripture? With whom do you study? How have your eyes been opened by the Scriptures in the past week, month and year? Asbury offers numerous opportunities to learn, including weekly Discipleship Communities. Helping Others Follow Jesus is incomplete if we do not direct people to the Scriptures. That’s how Jesus helped others follow Him.

EYE-OPENING

Tuesday, April 14, 2020

1 Corinthians 15:3-11

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

EYE-OPENING

Thursday, April 16, 2020

Hebrews 4:11-16

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Friday, April 17, 2020

2 Timothy 3:10-17

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

MIND-OPENING

Monday, April 20, 2020

Luke 24:36-53

Jesus' walk to Emmaus with these two followers is full of mystery, wonder and awe. Also read Luke's account of what happened in the early church (our daily readings from Acts). The New Testament repeatedly emphasized the word "Scripture(s)." Interestingly, the word "Scripture(s)" is never used in the Old Testament.

We have a phrase, "Word and Table." It means that Jesus is made known by the Word of God (Scripture) and by Holy Communion. These are two primary means of grace through which Jesus opens our eyes and our minds to new realities.

Worship can open our eyes, minds and hearts to consistent experiences of God's grace. Worship is best done as an automated rhythm of life (not haphazardly).

Asbury's strategic initiative for 2019-2020 is: "Helping Others Follow Jesus by strengthening worship attendance." We want you to attend worship services because everything leverages off worship. This is where we meet others, make new friends, get involved in study and service, sing, pray together, give our money, learn what is going on, share our creeds, receive and extend forgiveness, and hear the Scriptures proclaimed. It is a place to listen, learn, grow, witness and give our attention to God. We find a place where the main agenda is to follow Jesus. We find God's grace here. Worship rearranges life. It needs to be our No. 1 priority. In the absence of making it so, this saying becomes true: "*We worship our work, we work at our play and we play at our worship.*"

APPLICATION: Why do you think they did not know it was Jesus who was talking to them? Have you had an "eye-opening, mind-opening" (I want to say "mind-blowing") experience with Jesus, too? If so, that's wonderful. If not, that's probably normal. Following Jesus sometimes results in these kinds of events, but that is not why we follow Him. We follow because He is the key to life. He is "*the way, the truth and the life.*" He is "*the resurrection and the life.*"

Tuesday, April 21, 2020

Acts 8:26-40

- 1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
- 2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
- 3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

MIND-OPENING

Wednesday, April 22, 2020

Acts 13:13-43

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Thursday, April 23, 2020

Acts 17:1-15

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.

HELPING OTHERS FOLLOW JESUS

Saturday, April 25, 2020

Romans 1:1-7

1. What are your thoughts, feelings and application from reading today's text?
2. How does it tie in with the upcoming sermon?
3. Write down (at least) one person/thing/situation for which you are thankful.
