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# GRATITUDE AND SERMON JOURNAL

## **PRAYER**

February 15 - April 4, 2021

## **LOVING JESUS**

April 5 - May 30, 2021



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 reading on Monday is the sermon text for the following Sunday. The daily readings support the Sunday sermon. I'm pleased 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 on 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



# Small Group Discussion Questions

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 helping others follow 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:

- 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

## PRAYER

### PREPARATION

- 2/15 Mark 1:1-8
- 2/16 Luke 3:1-6
- 2/17 Matthew 3:1-6  
(Ash Wednesday)

### PRAISE

- 2/18 Psalm 22:22-31
- 2/19 Psalm 56
- 2/20 Psalm 71
- 2/21 Psalm 22:22-31

### PARDON

- 2/22 Isaiah 55
- 2/23 2 Chronicles 7:11-18
- 2/24 Psalm 51
- 2/25 Psalm 130
- 2/26 1 Timothy 1:12-17
- 2/27 1 John 1:5-10
- 2/28 Isaiah 55

### RECONCILIATION

- 3/1 Matthew 5:21-26
- 3/2 Genesis 3:1-13
- 3/3 Matthew 18:15-35
- 3/4 Colossians 3:12-17
- 3/5 Ephesians 4:25-32
- 3/6 Philemon 1-22
- 3/7 Matthew 5:21-26

### ACCORD

- 3/8 Romans 15:1-7
- 3/9 John 5:19-24
- 3/10 John 7:25-31
- 3/11 John 17:6-26
- 3/12 Acts 1:12-14
- 3/13 Ephesians 4:1-16
- 3/14 Romans 15:1-7

### YEARNING

- 3/15 Philippians 1:3-11
- 3/16 Psalm 27:1-14
- 3/17 Psalm 42
- 3/18 Psalm 84
- 3/19 Matthew 6:25-34
- 3/20 Romans 12:9-13
- 3/21 Philippians 1:3-11

### EARNEST

- 3/22 Matthew 9:35-38
- 3/23 Acts 12:1-5
- 3/24 Ephesians 6:10-20
- 3/25 1 Thessalonians 3:6-10
- 3/26 James 5:13-18
- 3/27 Hebrews 6:9-12
- 3/28 Matthew 9:35-38

### RESURRECTION

- 3/29 Acts 2:29-34
- 3/30 Acts 4:5-12
- 3/31 Acts 13:26-41
- 4/1 Romans 1:1-7
- 4/2 Ephesians 1:15-23
- 4/3 Hebrews 13:20-21
- 4/4 Acts 2:29-34 (Easter)

# Scripture Readings

## LOVING JESUS

### **SIMEON: THE SPIRIT AND SALVATION**

- 4/5 Luke 2:22-35
- 4/6 Leviticus 12
- 4/7 Isaiah 9:2-7
- 4/8 Acts 10:34-43
- 4/9 Acts 10:44-48
- 4/10 2 Peter 1:16-21
- 4/11 Luke 2:22-35

### **ANNA: Advanced in More Ways Than One**

- 4/12 Luke 2:36-38
- 4/13 Matthew 15:21-28
- 4/14 Luke 7:36-50
- 4/15 Luke 13:10-17
- 4/16 Luke 21:1-4
- 4/17 John 12:1-8
- 4/18 Luke 2:36-38

### **A LEPER: Lord, If You will...**

- 4/19 Luke 5:12-15
- 4/20 Leviticus 13:45-46
- 4/21 Numbers 12
- 4/22 2 Kings 5:1-14
- 4/23 2 Kings 5:15-27
- 4/24 Luke 4:16-30
- 4/25 Luke 5:12-16

### **A PARALYTIC: Show Me Your Friends**

- 4/26 Luke 5:17-26
- 4/27 Luke 7:1-10
- 4/28 Luke 23:6-12
- 4/29 John 15:12-17
- 4/30 Acts 4:23-31
- 5/1 3 John 13-15
- 5/2 Luke 5:17-26

### **WOMEN: Helping Others Following Jesus**

- 5/3 Luke 8:1-3
- 5/4 Matthew 27:55-56
- 5/5 Mark 10:35-45
- 5/6 Luke 23:44-56
- 5/7 Luke 24:1-12
- 5/8 Acts 1:12-14
- 5/9 Luke 8:1-3

### **LEGION: A New Proclamation**

- 5/10 Luke 8:26-39
- 5/11 Isaiah 61:1-9
- 5/12 Acts 16:16-24
- 5/13 Ephesians 6:10-20
- 5/14 Hebrews 2:14-18
- 5/15 1 John 5:19-21
- 5/16 Luke 8:26-39

### **A SICK WOMAN: On the Fringe**

- 5/17 Luke 8:42b-48
- 5/18 Leviticus 15:19-31
- 5/19 Mark 5:24b-34
- 5/20 Luke 7:36-50
- 5/21 Acts 12:1-19
- 5/22 2 Corinthians 12:1-10
- 5/23 Luke 8:42b-48

### **JAIRUS' DAUGHTER: Self-Differentiation**

- 5/24 Luke 8:40-42a; 49-56
- 5/25 Exodus 32:1-6
- 5/26 Nehemiah 6:1-9
- 5/27 Luke 11:45-54
- 5/28 John 6:60-71
- 5/29 John 18:1-11
- 5/30 Luke 8:40-42a; 49-56





# **PRAYER**

February 15 – April 4, 2021

# PRAYER

Reverend Hugh Harrison served the Oklahoma Annual Conference as a pastor for many years. I am Hugh Thomas Harrison, Jr.—but not his son. However, I became his pastor at Sunny Lane UMC when we moved to Del City. I asked him once, “*Hugh if you could reset your ministry, what would you do differently?*” Immediately he said, “I would have emphasized prayer more.” I remember Hugh’s perception. Philip Yancey and Timothy Keller both authored great books I strongly recommend called, “Prayer.” Both books helped me.

Answering questions and explaining prayer helps, but practice is essential. “Prayer” is a good follow-up to our “Effective” series on habits. Good habits about the right things help us be effective. People of faith always have prayed. Prayer is part of following Jesus and helping others follow Him, too.

**During Lent, I encourage you to do two things:**

- 1. Start (or be in) a Prayer Group.** As habit no. 1 states: Be proactive (not inactive or reactive). Proactive people take responsibility and make things happen. A proactive person will engage with this Lenten emphasis. Here are three suggestions: **Make it small.** “*For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them*” (Matthew 18:20). We begin the week of Ash Wednesday (February 17) and end during Holy Week (April 4 is Easter). This lasts for seven weeks. We have rooms at Asbury. You could meet at your home, at work or a restaurant. You could Zoom, or even Facetime. **Make it simple.** Meet for one hour or less. Read scripture. Use this journal (we have included a daily prayer point). Visit our main prayer room for more resources. Use the prayer walk that surrounds the building. Pray like the early church—focus on mission, evangelism and outreach. Pray for others. The Bible tells us to pray for the sick. However, all of us will die. For believers in Jesus, that is the ultimate “gain,” not loss. “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Philippians 1:21). **Focus on outreach.** We want people to know Jesus. Some of our friends, relatives, acquaintances and neighbors have never known Jesus. Others have wandered and lost their way. During Lent, let’s follow Jesus’ instruction: “*Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest’*” (Matthew 9:37-38). Pray for the harvest.
- 2. Fast.** John Wesley practiced fasting and required his preachers to fast on Fridays. He encouraged all Methodists to fast, too. Wesley’s fast started on Thursday at sundown (after the evening meal) and

ended at 3 pm on Friday. He fasted from solid food (see the fasting guide below). I encourage you to do this one day a week, even if you pick a different day (one that suits your schedule).

## Fasting Guide

Jesus did not command his followers to fast but said, “**When** you fast...” not “**if** you fast...” He linked fasting with giving and praying in His Sermon on the Mount. He tied the three together for a life of devotion. Fasting, common in ancient Israel and the early church, is often ignored today. Fasting is beneficial to our physical and spiritual health. We fast during Lent as a way of identifying with Jesus. We give up something of value eating—for something more valuable—our relationship with God. We can grow spiritually through the practice of fasting. Instead of spending time preparing and eating food, we spend that time in prayer and devotion to the Lord.

Most fasting eliminates eating solid food but allows drinking liquids. A partial fast eliminates certain foods from the diet such as meat (i.e., Daniel fast) or donuts (Pastor Tom fast). An absolute fast eliminates both solid food and liquids (demonstrated by Esther, but not recommended).

We can also fast from items such as screen time (i.e. social media, Facebook). This is a good option for someone who is pregnant, nursing, diabetic, anyone who struggles with an eating disorder, is anemic or has some other medical reason not to fast from food. If in doubt about your physical condition, consult a doctor.

This will be the first time for many of us to try this spiritual discipline. There is no set pattern for fasting. Don't be rigid. Let the Holy Spirit lead you. Fasting is a way to physically communicate a sincere heart-desire to the Lord. Going without food (or some other pleasurable activity) will be a challenge but fasting and prayer demonstrate you are determined to make room in your life for the Lord.

## Additional Opportunity

An Asbury member has felt called to pray for our leaders, as 1 Timothy 2:2 instructs: “*First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.*” He is working with Sarah Stitt, the wife of our current Governor, to have thirty churches across Oklahoma fast and pray on one specific day for our State and leadership. Asbury has selected the 18th of each month through the end of 2021. We encourage you to make this part of your prayer life, and to practice the “Wesley Fast” (described above).

PRAYER

Monday, February 15, 2021

Mark 1:1-8

“Ash Wednesday” is our unique way to begin the Lenten season. Ashes have two meanings. First, they indicate repentance. Job repents in the last chapter of the book named after him. He wears dust and ashes (42:6). Jeremiah 6:26 described this: *“O daughter of my people, put on sackcloth, and roll in ashes; make mourning as for an only son, most bitter lamentation, for suddenly the destroyer will come upon us.”* Oddly, Jonah (3:6) was angry when his message met a favorable response: *“The word reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, removed his robe, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.”* Jonah needed to repent as much as the Ninevites. They were unrighteous. He was self-righteous. As Paul said, *“Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges”* (Romans 2:1).

Dust is the second image of Ash Wednesday. Genesis 2:7 says, *“... then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.”* Abraham recognized his limitations, too: *“Abraham answered and said, ‘Behold, I have undertaken to speak to the Lord, I who am but dust and ashes’”* (Genesis 18:27).

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**APPLICATION:** As ashes are imposed on the foreheads of worshippers, we use these words: *“Repent and believe the gospel.”* We also say, *“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”* Our prayer of lament is our invitation to recognize and repent of sin. Ash Wednesday marks us as followers of Jesus.

**PRAY:** Father, prepare our hearts to better love you and neighbor this Lenten season.

PREPARATION

Tuesday, February 16, 2021  
Luke 3:1-6

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.

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**PRAY:** Everlasting God, may we be prepared to hear your voice this day.

PRAYER

Wednesday, February 17, 2021  
Matthew 3:1-6  
(Ash Wednesday)

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.

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**PRAY:** Loving God, prepare our hearts to receive your abundant forgiveness.

PRAISE

Thursday, February 18, 2021  
Psalm 22:22-31

Prayer never begins with us—but with the focus of our prayer: the Lord. Failure to pray is a failure to recognize God as God. However, our Lord desires our companionship. What the Lord said to Solomon applies to us: *“If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”* (2 Chronicles 7:14).

Following Jesus does not mean life is one wonderful moment after another. We love Psalm 23:1, *“The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.”* However, it follows Psalm 22. Jesus quoted these words of heartbreak from the cross, *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”* (Psalm 22:1). Indeed, we experience God-forsaken moments, too, when we are abandoned, in pain and despair. When we go through times of being lost, neglected, angry, fearful, worried and perplexed, it helps to remember that others, including Jesus, did too. Also, circumstances change. While Jesus died on the cross, His story was not over. His death served a larger purpose. Resurrection could only come after His death. Read ALL of Psalm 22. The initial lament turns to praise and proclamation. Psalm 22, 44, 60, 74, 79, 80, 85 and 90 are also prayers of lament. They confront the brutal facts of life’s burdens and woes. They are part of everyone’s journey, but praise, not lament, is the final word.

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**APPLICATION:** Have you started a Lenten prayer group yet? Guides for prayer are available in the prayer room to help you. Prayer has many components. Praise, adoration, worship and awe can describe our amazement at God’s glory and grace. Describe how you praise the Lord. When have your prayers been lamentations? Is your heart more inclined to lament or praise today?

**PRAY:** Lord, you continually leave us in awe. All our days, we will praise you and tell others of your goodness!

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.

PRAYER

Friday, February 19, 2021

Psalm 56

- 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.

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**PRAY:** Gracious God, instead of fear and worry, may praise and trust fill up our hearts.



PRAISE

Saturday, February 20, 2021  
Psalm 71

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.

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**PRAY:** Righteous God, you are our rock, our refuge and our rescue! We praise you!

PRAYER

Sunday, February 21, 2021

Psalm 22:22-31

**Sermon Notes:**

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## PARDON

# Monday, February 22, 2021 Isaiah 55

Isaiah 55 is a surpassing text. God's generous feast transcends our physical needs—He also speaks to our soul. What was dead can be restored and redeemed. *"Come, everyone who thirsts"* (Isaiah 55:1). When we recognize our need, we can come to the party. That God could be so gracious and inviting may not make sense because we don't think as God thinks. His ways are powerful and great. Our ways are limited, minor and trivial in comparison. God's word is potent and effective. I love this line too, *"He will abundantly pardon"* (Isaiah 55:7). Forgiveness is an important part of prayer. We are abundantly pardoned IF we make confession. However, God does not have a "pardon and parole board." We aren't on probation with the Lord. *"If the son sets you free, you will be free indeed"* (John 8:36). Then we can bear witness to God's goodness. As is said, *"Grace is one beggar telling another where to find bread."* We find the bread of life in Jesus Christ, who is of the line of David.

The first of Martin Luther's 95 Theses that launched the Protestant Reformation stated, *"When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matthew 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."* Each Sunday we say in our Communion liturgy: *"We confess that we have not loved you with our whole heart. We have failed to be an obedient church. We have not done your will, we have broken your law, we have rebelled against your love, we have not loved our neighbors, and we have not heard the cry of the needy. Forgive us, we pray. Free us for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Then we rejoice with these majestic words; *"Hear the good news: Christ died for us while we were yet sinners; that proves God's love toward us. In the name of Jesus Christ, you are forgiven!"*

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**APPLICATION:** How is your Lenten prayer group going? You can still start one. What touches your heart in Isaiah 55? We all carry something. We do not need to carry the burden of sin. We can give it to Jesus. What do you need to leave at the altar? Google the "Prayer of Examen" (I like Richard Foster's entry).

**PRAY:** Lord, you have quenched our deepest thirsts and satisfied our greatest hungers with your love. Thank you for your immeasurable gift of forgiveness.

PRAYER

Tuesday, February 23, 2021

2 Chronicles 7:11-18

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.

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**PRAY:** Everlasting God, as David walked before you and obeyed your commands, may we also walk before you and obey your commands.

PARDON

Wednesday, February 24, 2021

Psalm 51

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.

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**PRAY:** Only in you, O God. Only in you, can we be made clean. Come and cleanse our hearts this day.

PRAYER

Thursday, February 25, 2021

Psalm 130

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.

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**PRAY:** We wait on you, O Lord, for with you there is forgiveness, there is steadfast love, and there is plentiful redemption.

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.



PRAYER

Saturday, February 27, 2021

1 John 1:5-10

- 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.

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**PRAY:** God of Light, we have all sinned. We have all fallen short. Forgive us and cleanse us.





PRAYER

Monday, March 1, 2021  
Matthew 5:21-26

Like the cross, reconciliation is both vertical and horizontal. God pardons us, but we must extend forgiveness to others. We often look at forgiveness through an egotistical lens (“*THEY hurt ME*”) but tend to minimize our role (“*I hurt THEM*”). Adam and Eve blamed the serpent, each other and God. Resentment is toxic to any relationship. When we realize we are truly loved, accepted and forgiven by God, we no longer need to throw rocks at others. “*If God is for us, who can be against us?*” (Romans 8:31). Our identity is rooted in Christ. He loves us. We are truly and deeply loved.

In his book, “Unoffendable,” Brant Hansen says he often deems other motorists as idiots. Yet when Brant does what he condemns others for, THEY are still the idiots, not him. I smiled when I read his words, “*Everybody’s an idiot but me. I’m awesome. Go me.*” We, the forgiven, don’t have to be angry or offended. We do not have to condemn others. Part of the Lord’s Prayer is, “*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.*” Matthew 18:15-35 insists since we are forgiven such a staggering and hopeless debt by God we must not nickel and dime others who owe us. Bitterness destroys. Jesus modeled forgiveness (Luke 23:34). So did Stephen (Acts 7:60). Prayer is supposed to have wheels. It leads us to action. Being reconciled to God and to others is what Jesus intends for His disciples.

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**APPLICATION:** Jesus told His disciples after the resurrection: “*If you forgive the sins of anyone, they are forgiven; if you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld*” (John 20:23). What do you think that means?

Is the Lord speaking to you about asking someone for forgiveness (you are the guilty one)? Be sure to get wise counsel before approaching someone about forgiveness. We may get only one chance at it.

**PRAY:** King Jesus, you place such a strong emphasis on right relationships with others. May we strive to be reconciled with all our Christian siblings.

RECONCILIATION

Tuesday, March 2, 2021

Genesis 3:1-13

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.

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**PRAY:** Even when it is not easy, Lord, help us to speak the truth in love to others.

PRAYER

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Matthew 18:15-35

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord, as the Casting Crowns song says, "Let the memory of your mercy bring your people to their knees."



PRAYER

Friday, March 5, 2021  
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.

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**PRAY:** Father, give me strength to speak the truth today—even when it's not easy.







ACCORD

Monday, March 8, 2021  
Romans 15:1-7

Jesus, the Father and the Holy Spirit are one. Adam and Eve became one flesh. Jesus prayed for His disciples to be unified. His prayer includes us, too. Paul insisted harmony was essential. Strong bonds must be forged within the church. Paul said in Romans 15:6 the church should glorify God with one voice. Yet, Paul had such a very sharp disagreement with the “son of encouragement” (Barnabas) over John Mark’s (who was related to both Barnabas and Peter) behavior that Paul and Barnabas broke up. They went separate ways (Acts 15:36-41). They eventually reconciled: *“Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry,”* (2 Timothy 4:11) but the original division was painful.

Ideally, Christians should march to the beat of the same drummer, but we do not. We have different approaches and emphases. Some preferences are about doctrine, worship style, music, polity, race, age, mission, ministry programs, social issues and politics. Strong personalities, power and control issues exist too. Our differences often confuse Christians; imagine what others who aren’t followers of Jesus think.

Ephesians 4 is a great text. Read it carefully. It stresses how urgent unity is for the church. Verse 2 of the text shows how unity is created and developed. Note the emphasis in Romans 15:4 on, *“the encouragement of the Scriptures.”* No wonder John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, said, “I am a man of one book” (the Bible).

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**APPLICATION:** What promotes unity? What divides us? What are essentials? What makes you stay connected to Asbury? What would disconnect you? How might this saying: *“We will have to agree to disagree agreeably”* be helpful? How are you keeping our membership vow: *“I will be loyal to Jesus Christ as expressed through Asbury, and uphold it by my prayers, presence, gifts, service and witness”* this week?

**PRAY:** Father, Son and Holy Spirit, reveal to me the great importance of community.

PRAYER

Tuesday, March 9, 2021

John 5:19-24

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord Jesus, may we imitate you in honoring our Father.

ACCORD

Wednesday, March 10, 2021

John 7:25-31

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.

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**PRAY:** God, you are true. May we know you more and more each day.

PRAYER

Thursday, March 11, 2021

John 17:6-26

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.

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**PRAY:** God, we want to hear your words this day, for “whoever is of God hears the words of God.”

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.

Friday, March 12, 2021

Acts 1:12-14

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.

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**PRAY:** Father, help us to live in harmony with all our brothers and sisters in Christ.

PRAYER

Saturday, March 13, 2021

Ephesians 4:1-16

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.

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**PRAY:** Giver of everything good and perfect, thank you for the gifts you have given me. May they be used to encourage your church!



## PRAYER

# Monday, March 15, 2021

## Philippians 1:3-11

Yearning (“longing, craving, hunger, thirst, ache”) is our intense desire when separated from someone or something we love. Like a dehydrated deer, David “pants,” or yearns for God (Psalm 42). He is weary, exhausted, anxious and perplexed. Many of the Psalms speak of being parched, thirsty, dry and gasping. Paul yearns to be with his friends (Philippians 1:8). During hardship, he built strong bonds with the new believers there. He linked “yearn” with “*affection of Christ Jesus*” (verse 8). He had great affection for the Philippians. He seemed nostalgic as he reflected on “the good ol’ days” (was being thrown into the Philippian prison “the good ol’ days?”). Acts 16 is this story. He had affection for the Thessalonians, too: “*But since we were torn away from you, brothers, for a short time, in person not in heart, we endeavored the more eagerly and with great desire to see you face to face, because we wanted to come to you—I, Paul, again and again—but Satan hindered us. For what is our hope or joy or crown of boasting before our Lord Jesus at his coming? Is it not you? For you are our glory and joy*” (1 Thessalonians 2:17-20).

Indifference, sloth, apathy, disinterest and a lack of sympathy are the opposites of yearning. It’s the danger of the lukewarm heart (“*I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked*” (Revelation 3:15-17). It is easy (natural) to grow cold in the faith. Following Jesus is NOT about emotion—it is about affection.

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**APPLICATION:** What is the difference between emotion and affection? People of faith yearn for two things: God and people. “Yearning” is about having a heart for the things of God. Jesus said: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself*” (Matthew 22:37-39). Jesus asks: *How is your love life?* That is our question, too.

**PRAY:** Everlasting God, thank you for the joy of being in relationship with other Christians. Increase our love, O Lord, each day!



YEARNING

Tuesday, March 16, 2021

Psalm 27:1-14

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for the glorious story of redemption found in the Bible.

PRAYER

Wednesday, March 17, 2021

Psalm 42

- 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.

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**PRAY:** Like Ezra, may we too set our hearts to study your powerful word.

YEARNING

Thursday, March 18, 2021

Psalm 84

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.

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**PRAY:** God of our salvation, like the psalmist, we cry out, *"Your face, Lord, do I seek!"*

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.

PRAYER

Friday, March 19, 2021  
Matthew 6:25-34

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.

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**PRAY:** Father, before anything else, may we seek after your kingdom and righteousness.

YEARNING

Saturday, March 20, 2021

Romans 12:9-13

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord, may our hearts be filled with zeal for serving and worshipping you!



## EARNEST

Monday, March 22, 2021

Matthew 9:35-38

“Getting old ain’t for sissies” is true. I don’t minimize the problems of aging but getting old wasn’t the concern of the early Christians. Jesus’ big three disciples are all mentioned in Acts 12:1-5. James, the brother of John, was beheaded, Peter imprisoned. What did the church do? They prayed. How did they pray? With “earnest prayer.”

So much of our prayer time is for the sick. That is biblical. We are told to do that. However, mortality is 100 percent. All of us die eventually. I am not cavalier about aging or death. We experience loss and grief in both. However, we must remember our mission: Helping Others Follow Jesus. Trouble follows when we get off mission and become earthbound rather than seeking the kingdom of God.

On the night Jesus was arrested, He prayed earnestly in Gethsemane that this cup could pass from Him (Mark 14:32-42). Paul gave the Ephesians great instructions on prayer: “... *praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me ...*” (Ephesians 6:18-19). He told the Thessalonians: “... *we pray most earnestly night and day that we may see you face to face and supply what is lacking in your faith ...*” (1 Thessalonians 3:10). James describes how Elijah was a righteous man who prayed fervently, with the admonition to us to do the same. The writer of Hebrews (6:11-12) has an application for us too: “*And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*”

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**APPLICATION:** Who are you earnestly praying will come to Christ? Family members? Friends? Neighbors? Acquaintances? Kids and students? Remember to pray for the persecuted church. Practice what Paul wrote to Timothy: “... *I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

**PRAY:** Like the early church, may we be fervent and earnest in our prayers.

PRAYER

Tuesday, March 23, 2021  
Acts 12:1-5

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.

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**PRAY:** Today, and every day, this is my prayer, O Lord: *“Not what I will, but what you will.”*



EARNEST

Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Ephesians 6:10-20

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.

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**PRAY:** Help me to serve others today with enthusiasm, eagerness and earnestness.

PRAYER

Thursday, March 25, 2021  
1 Thessalonians 3:6-10

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.

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**PRAY:** Eternal God, thank you for equipping me and empowering me to be strong in you.

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.

Friday, March 26, 2021

James 5:13-18

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord, help us to never forget: "*The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.*"

PRAYER

Saturday, March 27, 2021

Hebrews 6:9-12

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.

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**PRAY:** We come to you in awe and wonder, O God. Teach us obedience—even when it is not easy.



## PRAYER

# Monday, March 29, 2021

## Acts 2:29-34

The resurrection of Jesus is the single most transformative event since creation. How can a dead man return to life, walk through walls, eat, disappear, yet appear perfectly normal? How could a doubtful disciple, Thomas, put his hand into Jesus' side and touch the piercing on Jesus' resurrected body? How could Jesus ascend to heaven? How did terrified disciples become bold witnesses of Jesus? I have more questions than answers, but if I could explain everything I would not need to worship. There is mystery here.

The context of Acts 2:29-33 is the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the disciples and the church was born. Pentecost excited and empowered the disciples. Pentecost confused and bewildered outsiders (they thought the disciples were drunk). The cowardly denier, Peter, who had feared arrest as a follower of Jesus, became a new man. Full of the Holy Spirit, he preached the first sermon in the history of the church. Peter explained the good news. When asked what they could do, Peter said, *"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself"* (Acts 2:38-39).

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**APPLICATION:** Have you heard the Good News? Jesus died for our sins. God raised Him from the dead. The Holy Spirit gives life. We receive the gift of salvation when we trust Jesus Christ. It is easy to do. Yet, our pride resists. Most feel either unworthy (God doesn't love me), or that we can save ourselves (by being good). Whether "naughty or nice" all need a Savior. We all need forgiveness. We cannot get to heaven on our own. Jesus makes these gifts possible. He also provides meaning and purpose in life, gives us a worshipping community to belong to, helps us use the Scriptures to navigate life, and gives us a new identity. Today can be the day if you have never asked Jesus to come into your heart: *"... if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved"* (Romans 10:9). Please tell someone if you do this. We are here for you.

**PRAY:** God, as we get ready for Easter Sunday, we ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation.



PRAYER

Wednesday, March 31, 2021

Acts 13:26-41

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.

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**PRAY:** There is power in the Name of Jesus! Like Peter, may we strive to share this good news with others.



RESURRECTION

Thursday, April 1, 2021

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.

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**PRAY:** We ask that you teach us, Jesus, how to love others as you have loved us.

**FAST:** Begin 24-hour fast. For example, eat dinner on Thursday night, then fast through breakfast and lunch on Friday. Break your fast with dinner on Friday night.

PRAYER

Friday, April 2, 2021

Ephesians 1:15-23

Maundy Thursday

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.

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**PRAY:** Thank you for the Scriptures—which testify to who Jesus is!

RESURRECTION

Saturday, April 3, 2021

Hebrews 13:20-21

Good Friday

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.

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**PRAY:** Lord, you are my shepherd. I shall not want.



# **LOVING JESUS**

April 5 - May 30, 2021

## “ONE SOLITARY LIFE”

“He was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another obscure village where he worked in a carpenter shop until he was 30. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never went to college. He never visited a big city. He never travelled more than 200 miles from the place where he was born. He did none of the things usually associated with greatness. He had no credentials but himself. He was only thirty-three. His friends ran away. One of them denied him. He was turned over to his enemies and went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed to a cross between two thieves. While dying, his executioners gambled for his clothing, the only property he had on earth. When he was dead, he was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend. Nineteen centuries have come and gone and today, Jesus is the central figure of the human race and the leader of mankind’s progress. All the armies that have ever marched, all the navies that have ever sailed, all the parliaments that have ever sat, all the kings that ever reigned put together have not affected the life of mankind on earth as powerfully as this one solitary life.” —James Allan Francis, 1926

## Loving Jesus

Over the next eight weeks we will examine some less familiar stories of Jesus as told in Luke (chapters 2-8) about some common people who encountered Jesus. While their stories are different, the result was the same—Jesus changed their lives.

This series is all-encompassing. Seniors, women, outcasts, the demon-possessed, a dad and his deathly-ill daughter all needed help and hope. Marginalized, forgotten, neglected, irrelevant and non-essential—many were in a world of hurt. Jesus came to give us a relationship with the greatest love of all, not to give us more rules.

Luke quotes Peter's sermon in Acts 10:38-39: *"God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem."*

Jesus is truly the Name above every name. Over these two months we will glimpse more of His character. He is Lord. While lion-like, He is fearsome; but the Lamb of God came with the intent for us to love Him, not cower in fear and shame before Him. This series will help us to get to know Jesus better and to love Him more than ever before. Love (God and others) is the goal and the greatest part of life (1 Corinthians 13). Consider buying the wonderful book by Charles Colson, "Loving God." The Bible is not an ancient historical document that is irrelevant to us. Because of the resurrection, Jesus' promises are validated for all time. He is still providing the same faith, hope and love for followers today that He did while He physically walked the earth.

LOVING JESUS

Monday, April 5, 2021

Luke 2:22-35

Things have settled down since the Christmas story. Joseph and Mary returned home to Nazareth. The angels departed, but the Holy Spirit is at work in a righteous, devout and patient man named Simeon. Simeon, full of the Spirit, had a special hope—that he would see the Messiah. The dream of his lifetime was fulfilled the day Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple. Can you imagine how he felt when he lifted the child? Some of us have felt the transcendent joy of holding a newborn child.

A moving song, “Give Me Jesus,” has simple lyrics: “In the morning, when I rise, give me Jesus. Give me Jesus. You can have all this world but give me Jesus. And when I am alone, give me Jesus. And when I come to die, you can have all this world, but give me Jesus.” All Simeon wanted in life was to see the Messiah. Pure and simple that was it—give me Jesus!

Simeon had a blessing for Joseph and Mary that was both comforting and challenging. Their baby will make some fall and others rise. Some will love and worship Him. Others will resist and oppose Him. Joseph and Mary needed to know what was before them. It was good news and bad news. A sword will pierce their hearts.

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**APPLICATION:** I think life is about two things: First, have wisdom. Second, have others to share it with. Wisdom without relationships has no impact. Relationships without wisdom leads to disaster. How are you gaining wisdom? How is the Holy Spirit impacting your life? Who are you sharing your wisdom with? What habits and systems do you use to gain wisdom to share with others?







SIMEON: THE SPIRIT AND SALVATION

Thursday, April 8, 2021

Acts 10:34-43

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.

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Monday, April 12, 2021

Luke 2:36-38

We do not know how old Simeon was, but Luke says Anna “*was advanced in years.*” Our text says she was 84. Anna seems virtually destitute of the world’s goods, but her heart of worship made her rich in spirit. Anna might not have been on the cover of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, but she was truly a lovely woman. Hers was not external beauty—but the presence of God within her. Like Simeon, she saw the Messiah. She wasn’t wealthy, educated, cultured, famous, beautiful or powerful in secular ways, but she was mighty in spirit and in power.

We meet some truly wonderful people in life. Some are wealthy, but often they are simple people with a singular focus. They do not need “stuff” to live a meaningful life. Americans have more stuff than at any time in the history of the world, but I doubt we are the happiest people ever. Wealth can have a significant downside. I’m reminded of Proverb 30:8-9 (NIV): “... *give me neither poverty nor riches but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonor the name of my God.*”

Anna found joy and contentment in loving and serving Jesus.

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**APPLICATION:** Our readings this week look at stories of Jesus’ interaction with women. He paid attention to them—He did not overlook them. Who should you pay more attention to? Children? Seniors? Women? Men? Bosses? Employees? Rich? Poor? Someone from a different culture or race, or who speaks a different language? Be on the lookout for divine encounters that God has ordained for you this week.

Tuesday, April 13, 2021

Matthew 15:21-28

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.

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Thursday, April 15, 2021

Luke 13:10-17

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.

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Sunday, April 18, 2021

Luke 2:36-38

**Sermon Notes:**

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Monday, April 19, 2021

Luke 5:12-15

*“And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him,”* would have been one of the most amazing statements a person living in the first century AD could hear. Lepers weren’t quarantined for a WEEK—they were exiled from their family and community for a LIFETIME. A leper became loathsome. Other than another leper, no one would dare touch them lest you get their dreadful disease. The physical part was painful, but the psychological, emotional and spiritual hurt was also devastating. They were hardly people anymore.

The Old Testament has a few stories of people getting leprosy because of divine punishment. Miriam criticized her brother, Moses, and got it. So did Elisha’s greedy servant, Gehazi. When Jesus mentioned Naaman in the Nazareth synagogue—they tried to kill Jesus because He made a Gentile the hero. Gentiles were about as welcome as lepers to a proper Jew then. Jesus went from the penthouse to the doghouse in Nazareth when He included Gentiles.

People who “have it all” often have difficulty turning to the Lord. The Prodigal repented and returned when he lost it all. The elder brother didn’t recognize his own bitter heart. Whether unrighteous or self-righteous, there is a better way—the experience of Jesus’ touch.

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**APPLICATION:** When were you like a leper—marginalized, ostracized, a loser, an outcast, unpopular, overlooked, minimized, shunned, forgotten, pushed down? Was it related to health, finances, relationships or something else? Were you bullied? Did you drop out of school? Did you get fired? Did you divorce? Have you gotten well? Not only will Jesus heal our hurts, habits and hang ups, but we have others who have been on similar journeys. Places like Celebrate Recovery (Monday nights at 6:00 here) can help you. Everyone is carrying something. Who can you Help Follow Jesus this week? Who can you welcome into the family of God?



Wednesday, April 21, 2021

Numbers 12

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.

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Thursday, April 22, 2021

2 Kings 5:1-14

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.

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Friday, April 23, 2021

2 Kings 5:15-27

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.

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A LEPER: LORD, IF YOU WILL ...

Saturday, April 24, 2021

Luke 4:16-30

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.

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LOVING JESUS  
Sunday, April 25, 2021  
Luke 5:12-16

**Sermon Notes:**

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Monday, April 26, 2021

Luke 5:17-26

We again meet the incomparable Jesus. Several cast members participate in this remarkable story. The hero, Jesus, is pestered by His persistent critics, the Pharisees. They always tried to trap Him. They showed up in force—even from Jerusalem. How could they not love what Jesus was doing? They loved rules, not people. They reacted to Jesus with anger, bitterness, contempt, envy, hardness of heart and judgment. When the paralytic's companions couldn't bring him through the front door of a house because of a large crowd, they improvised. "*Necessity is the mother of all invention.*" Their friend had a need. This was their opportunity to help. They seized the moment. They were proactive. It seems doubtful His critics were convinced even when they saw the miracle.

Healing comes in many ways. Healing usually comes through the phenomenal gifts of doctors, medicine, science and technology. Sometimes, the Lord heals us through a supernatural event. We pray for healing however it happens. Yet, we are more than physical beings—we have souls and spirits. Body, mind and spirit share a strong relationship.

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**APPLICATION:** The "sinners" Jesus met broke the rules and caused havoc. The Pharisees, on the other hand, loved their rules more than they loved people. While we all need to judge behaviors and determine what is right from what is wrong, that is different than condemning others. Are you more of a rule-breaker or a rule-enforcer? Why? How can you be more like Jesus?

One of my axioms is: "*Show me your friends and I'll show you your future.*" Friends are a major influence on us. How are they influencing you and vice versa? As we celebrate graduation, we pray for our grads to make good friends in life. Look for "friends" in our readings this week.









Friday, April 30, 2021

Acts 4:23-31

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.

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LOVING JESUS

Monday, May 3, 2021  
Luke 8:1-3

The author of the Gospel bearing his name, Dr. Luke, paid attention to lost or overlooked people and things. Only Luke records our two favorite parables (Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son). He held women in high esteem (so does the Gospel of John). Our Christian heritage elevated the status of women like no other tradition. Luke has a simple note about followers of Jesus. Men typically get the credit, but it appears women often did the work so the men could go on preaching, teaching and healing missions. These women had diverse backgrounds and stories. They have one thing in common—they were Helping Others Follow Jesus. While not the preachers, their gifts allowed Jesus’ ministry to happen. Jesus depended on women. Paul had women serve with him in significant roles in mission, too.

Asbury’s three core staff behaviors describe these women: *Confident Humility; Committed Team Player; Genuine Kindness*. When we know our place on the team, whether public or private, we can move mountains. Jesus modeled this well: “For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve” (Mark 10:45).

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**APPLICATION:** Examine Asbury’s three core staff behaviors. Do they make sense to you? Do you practice them? Which one(s) do you need to work on? Who are the women who have helped your walk with the Lord? What woman can you show your appreciation for this week? How will you express it to them?



Wednesday, May 5, 2021

Mark 10:35-45

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.

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LOVING JESUS

Friday, May 7, 2021

Luke 24:1-12

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.

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LOVING JESUS  
Sunday, May 9, 2021  
Luke 8:1-3

**Sermon Notes:**

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LEGION: A NEW PROCLAMATION

Monday, May 10, 2021

Luke 8:26-39

I have been intrigued by this story since I first read it as a teenager. Something dark, spooky and weird intrigues me about it. The man called “Legion” (a legion in the Roman army had 6,000 soldiers) was full of evil. We don’t know how he got in such trouble, but clearly, he was both insane and terrifying. As Jesus did on numerous occasions (touching a leper, confronting the Pharisees, remaining calm in storms on the Sea of Galilee, handing the sop to Judas at the last supper, praying in the Garden, standing before Pilate, etc.) He again displayed incredible courage. Jesus knew who He was and would not be deterred or diverted from His mission. He came to proclaim good news to the captive. The formerly demon-possessed man had a story to tell. He became a proclaimer of good news too.

I was with an Asbury group one year in the land of the Gerasenes when we saw a herd of wild swine rush down the hill toward the Sea of Galilee. Yoav, our guide, said this was the season when this was common. Knowing this story from Luke 8 made it a stunning event for our group.

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**APPLICATION:** We can apply this story in many ways: the power of Jesus vs. the enemy; the story of the joy of salvation; the witness of someone released from the bondage of evil; the opposition of people to the gospel; restoration of an insanely evil person over the prevail of pigs and profit. How do you relate to this story? Have you been delivered of something? Do you have that need today? What steps do you need to take? What story has Jesus given to you to tell? How might your proclamation Help Others Follow Jesus?



Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Acts 16:16-24

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.

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LEGION: A NEW PROCLAMATION

Friday, May 14, 2021

Hebrews 2:14-18

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.

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LOVING JESUS

Monday, May 17, 2021

Luke 8:42b-48

The story of the woman with a discharge of blood for 12 years is sandwiched between the story of Jairus' daughter (next week's text). She didn't have leprosy, but she was impure according to the Jewish Law (Leviticus 15). Consequences followed. Twelve years is a long time. Her illness became her identity. She spent all her money trying to get well. She had only one hope—maybe something good could happen because Jesus of Nazareth was passing her way. She did not have the courage to talk to Jesus but hoped to sneak up unseen from behind and anonymously touch the hem of His garment. It is amazing Jesus knew something had happened. She exhibited great faith. Her hope was realized. You know she loved Jesus after she met Him.

Jesus always saw people as people. She was a person of sacred worth, even though she was "impure" according to the Law. Jesus wanted her to know there is more to life than the Law, and more than just physical healing—she could go "in peace." Jesus gives His followers peace (see Luke 7:50).

Some in the Bible were healed because of their faith. Others were reluctant, hesitant or doubtful. Others were not healed. Why was Peter miraculously released from prison, but James martyred? Paul prayed without success three times for the thorn in his flesh to be removed. A miracle does not happen for everyone. We need to make sense of suffering, pain and evil. Even though she was healed, like all of us, she would later die from something. The larger purpose of this miracle was to be another sign of Christ's identity—the Messiah.

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**APPLICATION:** Why do you think Jesus asked her to reveal herself? Have you had a miracle in your life or known someone who has had one? Have you ever felt disappointed because you didn't get what you asked for from God? Most importantly, what practices lead you to peace?



LOVING JESUS

Wednesday, May 19, 2021

Mark 5:24b-34

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.

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A SICK WOMAN: ON THE FRINGE

Thursday, May 20, 2021

Luke 7:36-50

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.

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LOVING JESUS  
Friday, May 21, 2021  
Acts 12:1-19

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.

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Monday, May 24, 2021

Luke 8:40-42a; 49-56

Unlike the woman with the discharge of blood who spent all her money on medical treatments and was still in anguish, Jairus was at the top rung of his social ladder. Like Nicodemus, Jairus was wealthy, influential and a respected ruler in the synagogue. He had life by the tail. But like the woman, he had a desperate need: his only child was dying. Most parents will do anything, anytime, anywhere for their kids. His distress brought him to his knees before Jesus. Then it got worse. While Jairus was pleading for help, he learns she died. Can you imagine his heartache? Jesus once again shows His mastery: *"She is not dead but sleeping"* (verse 52b).

We do not know who "they" were, but anytime someone tries to lead, sabotage and betrayal follow. Conspirators run together, so "they" snickered with derision, ridicule and sarcasm. Ed Friedman wrote in a book, "A Failure of Nerve," how this plays out. People resist change in every sphere of life (sports, business, education, politics, the armed services, family and ministry). Most of us prefer the status quo. We don't like people telling us we must change, grow and improve or else we will become irrelevant. Jesus was a major change agent. Jesus' enemies sabotaged Him. The shock is that one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, did the same. We will read this week about the sabotage of leaders. Haters are gonna hate. Jesus knew how to shake it off.

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**APPLICATION:** Have you ever tried to lead something but lost your nerve when people sabotaged you? Did you decide to quit leading or were you able to recover your nerve? Have you ever sabotaged another leader? What made you do it?













