



# JOURNEY:

40-DAY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

A 40-DAY LENTEN DEVOTIONAL

By The Shenandoah District of the Wesleyan Church

## **Welcome to this 40-day devotional journey!**

In the following pages, you'll find a devotional book crafted by pastors and leaders from the Shenandoah District and beyond. We invite you to read along with us as we embark on this spiritual journey together.

Throughout these 40 days, we will virtually visit many of the places where Jesus performed miracles and experienced pivotal moments in His life on Earth. While these events are not presented in chronological order, they follow the path we would take if traveling through these towns on a map.

Please note that we are not expert cartographers, so the distances may not be exact. And if you ever have the opportunity to visit the Holy Land in person—please don't rely on our map for navigation!

Nonetheless, we warmly invite you to walk this path with us, reflecting on the life of Christ. May this journey bless and inspire you during this sacred season of preparation.

## **Join the Challenge!**

While our journey together may be virtual, we encourage you to get active and walk the actual number of steps it would take to complete this journey! To cover the distances outlined in this book, aim for 10,000 steps each day—equivalent to five miles. But remember, every step counts! Whether you're walking intentionally, moving around the house, at work, or even while shopping, it all adds up.

That said, take time to step outside, enjoy God's creation, and embrace the opportunity for prayer and reflection. Many people find that walking is not only great for physical health but also a meaningful way to connect spiritually (just be sure to keep your eyes open!).

If 10,000 steps a day feels overwhelming, set a goal that works for you. This journey isn't about keeping pace with others—it's about taking steps toward better health, both physically and spiritually. You can track your progress right on the pages of this devotional, or, if you'd like to walk alongside others, join our PACER challenge outlined below.

And always remember: the path to the Cross isn't 400,000 steps away—or even 400. Christ is with you, right here, right now.

## **Directions to join the PACER Challenge:**

1) Download the Pacer APP from your app store 2) Click CHALLENGE icon in bottom right corner 3) enter challenge code "BU6W100Q" at the top of the screen 4) Join Challenge. That's it! Pacer automatically logs your steps for you. You may want to open the app from time to time to check your progress and to make sure it is still counting your steps!

*Digital copies of this book may be found at [shenandoahdistrict.ws/forms](https://shenandoahdistrict.ws/forms). Paper copies may be requested from your church.*

## Day 1: What Is Lent? (And No, It's Not Just a Catholic Thing)

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

By Pastor Heather St. Clair

Penn Forest Wesleyan

### Read Romans 12:1

Lent. You've probably heard of it. Maybe you've seen people walking around with ashes on their foreheads on Ash Wednesday or heard someone mumbling about giving up chocolate, coffee, or social media (bless them). But what is Lent, really? And do you have to be Catholic to observe it?

Nope! While Lent is often associated with Catholicism, many Christians, including Protestants, Evangelicals, and yes, even Wesleyans, observe it too.

Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) leading up to Easter. It's a time of reflection, repentance, and preparation. Think of it as spiritual spring cleaning - a chance to clear out the clutter in our hearts and refocus on Jesus. These 40 days represent the time Jesus spent fasting in the wilderness, facing temptation but remaining faithful (Matthew 4:1-11).

Traditionally, people observe Lent by fasting, prayer, and giving. The idea isn't just to suffer through caffeine withdrawal or to prove how strong you are by avoiding sweets (though let's be real, that is an accomplishment). It's about making space for God. When we give something up, we're reminded that Jesus is our ultimate source of satisfaction. And when we add something, like intentional prayer or serving others, we grow closer to Him.

Lent isn't about checking a religious box or proving how holy you are; it's about drawing closer to Jesus. So, whether you give something up, add something in, or simply take time to reflect, remember it's not about rules. It's about grace. And if you do decide to give up coffee... well, I'll be praying for you. 😊

## Day 2: Psalm 91

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

By Pastor Brian Cook

Brookhill Wesleyan

### Read Joshua 1:9

Early mornings that nudge us awake when it's yet dark outside pose such an innocent threat. They begin so quietly and unassumingly, each moment enveloped in a soft cushion of solitude. Time slowly emerges from its silent slumber and is experienced by those who are stirred by its immanence as if it belonged only to themselves. There's a certain intimacy that belongs to those who shuffle about while others are buried still in a timeless state where fates and dreams remain unremembered.

As tranquil and safe as these first moments of a day can appear, there comes an impending awareness that each new day may unfold from the calmness of its initial greeting into any number of haunting scenarios. The delicacy of our fragile expectations and assumptions is at risk of being tumbled and re-arranged, if not broken beyond recognition. We are seldom forewarned. One could become neurotic and start each day in a panic if it weren't for an abiding confidence in the prevenient grace of a Sovereign God. The psalmist knew this, of course, when he wrote:

You will not be afraid of the terror by night or of the arrow that flies by day,  
or of the pestilence that stalks in the darkness or of the destruction that lays  
waste at noon... for the MOST HIGH is your dwelling place... He will give His  
angels charge concerning you, to guard you in all your ways.

Perhaps a daily prayer would be a worthy exercise: **Thank you, Lord, for this promise, though we seldom remember to give You praise for such faithfulness. We dare not imagine our lives apart from such tender mercy. Deserving we're not recipients, but recipients nonetheless of Your bountiful mercy and amazing grace; in this early quietness comes the humbling awareness that we are already most blessed. Amen.**

### Day 3: "Following the Leader!"

By Pastor Myron Atkinson

Penn Forest Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Matthew 4:19 (NLT) "Jesus called out to them, "Come, follow me, and I will show you how to fish for people!"**

I've made some observations over the past eight years, living out in the country again with a small farm. These observations come from my animals. We have six donkeys, and one is typically the leader. Where she goes, the others follow. If she brays, the others bray. If she starts running, the others start running and blindly follow, forming a parade. (They really run when I leave the gate open. I hate that!) It doesn't just happen with the donkeys but also with our three dogs. If one barks, the others bark; if one is getting attention, the other two run over to get attention; if one takes off running outside, the others follow, not knowing what they are chasing. It's generally just the air.

What is interesting is that it doesn't just happen with animals, but it also happens with humans. My mom, and probably many other parents, used to tell me, "Just because everyone else is doing it doesn't mean you have to." That is so true. I see too many Christians chasing the things of the world and following them when they have no clue what they are chasing after. We do it to be accepted by the world. James 4:4 (NLT) tells us, "If you want to be a friend of the world, you make yourself an enemy of God." We should be focusing on following our leader, Jesus Christ, who has given us an example that we must follow in HIS steps! (1 Peter 2:21) May we stop running around aimlessly but instead focus our attention on Jesus Christ and relentlessly pursue Him and the people He loves!

**Question to ask yourself: Who are you chasing after or following?**

### Day 4: The Baptism of Jesus – A Declaration of Identity

By Pastor Lewis Brandon

Jordantown Wesleyan

**Read Matthew 3:13–17**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location: Jordan River-** Today we have traveled 20 miles and have reached the banks of the Jordan River.

In Matthew 3:13–17, we witness a powerful moment in the baptism of Jesus. As He emerges from the water, the heavens open, and the Spirit of God descends like a dove. Then, a voice from heaven declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." In this scene, the Son is baptized, the Spirit descends, and the Father proclaims His divine approval from heaven.

This moment was more than just a public act—it was a divine declaration of Jesus' true identity to all who would hear it. God the Father publicly affirmed Jesus as His beloved Son, marking the beginning of His earthly ministry.

For us, this declaration of Jesus as the beloved Son is a reminder of our own identity in Christ. Through His voluntary submission, Jesus fulfilled every requirement for righteousness (Matt. 3:15). By faith in this beloved Son of God, we are adopted into God's family (John 1:12–13).

We are chosen, loved, and declared worthy in God's sight because of Jesus. Our identity is not based on what we do but on who we are in Christ. Even before Jesus completed His ministry, He was fully loved by the Father.

As we reflect on the baptism of Jesus, let it remind us that we, too, are beloved sons and daughters of God through faith in Jesus Christ. May we live in the security of this truth, knowing that God is pleased with us—not because of our performance, but because of our identity in Christ.

How often do we define our worth by what we do, how well we perform, or how others perceive us? The world says our value is tied to success, productivity, and comparison. But in Christ, our identity is not defined by our achievements but by our adoption into the family of God.

Embrace your identity in Christ and live with the assurance that you are His beloved. Be fearless in obeying, loving, and walking in holiness as a beloved son or daughter of King Jesus.

## Day 5: Deepening Faith in Jesus

By Courtney Stephenson

Emmanuel Wesleyan

Read John 11:1-46

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

In John 11, we read about many different people groups' faith: the disciples, Mary and Marth, and the Jews. Faith, defined, means belief or trust in. This passage of scripture allows two of the groups' faith to be challenged and deepened in Jesus, and the third group chooses to have faith in Jesus for the first time, all in His perfect timing. This all came about with the illness and death of Lazarus, Jesus' dear friend.

Let's discuss the disciples first. The disciples had been following Jesus for some time and had seen many miraculous events to grow their faith/belief in Jesus and Him being the Messiah. John 11 sets up the disciples to grow their faith in Jesus once again as Jesus asks them to return to Judea, the place where Jesus was almost stoned to death. They were reluctant but did agree to return, even saying in verse 16 that they may die with Jesus when they return. What kind of faith is that? These were Jesus' disciples, His followers, and they had already decided before entering Judea that they were all going to die. But Jesus.

Mary and Martha were close friends of Jesus and were the two ladies who sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was ill, and they needed Him to return to save his life. Jesus did not immediately go to Lazarus, Mary, and Martha but instead stayed two more days where He was. Upon arriving in Bethany, where Mary and Martha met him, Jesus found Lazarus had already died and had been buried for four days. Mary and Martha both say to Jesus that Lazarus may have been healed if He had only been here. Their faith was limited as soon as Lazarus died. They did not have the faith that Jesus could raise anyone from the dead. But Jesus.

The third group of people in our scripture are the Jews. They were with Mary and Martha during this time of grief. This people group is the one Jesus was truly trying to reach. They did not believe He was God, the Messiah, sent to save the world. Instead, they were the same group who previously wanted to stone Him. Now, here they are, lacking all faith in Jesus, thinking He was only there because of a friendship with Lazarus. But Jesus.

At the beginning of this passage, in verse 4, the Bible says, "When Jesus heard this [Lazarus was ill], He said, 'This sickness will not end in death; but for the glory and honor of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.'" And this is exactly what happened. Jesus raised Lazarus from the tomb in front of the disciples, Mary and Martha, and the Jews. They all witnessed such an amazing miracle, and because of this, the faith of the disciples, Mary, and Martha grew. They became even more trusting of Jesus and who He truly was. Not only that, but many of the Jews who were there as witnesses "believed in Him" (v.45). Jesus's perfect timing grew these people's faith so much so that because of this one miracle, more people came to know who He truly was. All of this was to bring glory to God! What a thought, but Jesus!

I have had those "but Jesus" moments in my personal life. I know of moments when my faith is like the disciples: I'll do what you ask and expect the worst outcome. I've been like Mary and Martha and thought, Jesus, if you had only been here sooner, or this had happened earlier, it would be better. But Jesus. He has perfect timing, and it is all to bring our heavenly Father, God, the glory. Because of Jesus, more were able to come to faith/belief in Him who previously wanted to kill Him. What a blessing for all of our "but Jesus" moments and how He works and moves in our lives to bring us closer to Him and also to those around us witnessing such amazing moments! But Jesus!

## Day 6: Jesus Is Tested in the Wilderness

By Pastor Windy Walton

New Hope Fellowship

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location: "The Wilderness"**- Today we have traveled 30 miles and reached "The Wilderness".

The apostle John identified three major human weaknesses Satan exploits in his efforts to tempt us to sin: "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16).

As we read Matthew's account of how Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, we see how our Lord's human nature enables Him to sympathize with our own weaknesses because He was subjected to weakness, too. As we face these same temptations today, it is imperative that we learn and understand how Jesus was able to rise above them.

Jesus Fasted-Matthew 4:2 states Jesus fasted for forty days and forty nights. This fasting was not just about abstaining from food but also about seeking spiritual nourishment and strength from God. We grow closer to God by practicing the four basic spiritual disciplines of prayer, fasting, meditation, and Bible study. As we fast and humble ourselves before our Father, this enables us to fight whatever Satan tries to tempt us with.

Jesus had God's Word in His heart and mind. He answered every temptation Satan threw at Him with scripture. He was able to do that because He had read and studied the Scriptures. He applied the principle of Psalm 119:11: "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You." The more God's Word is in our hearts, the more likely we will be able to draw on it when we need it.

Jesus rejected temptation quickly- The Gospel accounts don't describe Jesus taking time to deliberate Satan's offers. He didn't linger over His options or dwell on the sin's possible benefits. He refused to let the temptations linger in His mind. One of the keywords the Bible uses when talking about temptation is flee (1 Corinthians 6:18; 10:14; 1 Timothy 6:11; Psalm 37:27-29).

Jesus' temptation in the wilderness teaches us, as we navigate our own wilderness temptations, the importance of spiritual discipline, dependence on God's word, and the refining/purifying process of trials. Let us embrace these lessons and seek to reflect more of God's image in our lives.

#### **Questions to Reflect On:**

- 1. What temptations are you currently facing? Can you see it as a time when God is trying to refine or prepare you for something?**
- 2. How can you integrate more of God's word into your daily life?**
- 3. What spiritual discipline can you start to draw closer to God?**

#### **Day 7: Jesus and the Children**

**By Edward Arrington**

**Clearview Wesleyan**

Number of Steps: _____
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**Read Mark 10:13-16; see also Matthew 19:13-15; Luke 18:15-17**

Many of us have seen the picture of Jesus with the little children gathered around his feet and sitting on his lap. My first memory of the picture was in the children's Sunday school classroom when I was a little boy. Just thinking about it brings back fond memories of a special teacher from my childhood. Interestingly, my memories are not about her teaching. She was my teacher at the church we attended before we started attending the Wesleyan Church when I was eight years old. We still visited the former church on occasion over the years. I remember the warm greetings and smiles my former teacher gave me whenever she saw me. I imagine that's how the children who were brought to Jesus felt. His attitude toward them would let them know they were important to Him. Unlike the disciples, who wanted to send them scurrying back into their parents' arms, Jesus made them feel loved, accepted, safe, and important to Him. I doubt He had to offer candy and treats to entice them to come to Him. The children wanted to be near Him, and He made it quite clear to the disciples that He wanted the children right where they were. He blessed them before their parents took them away.

Do the children in your home, church, and other places you frequent know that you care about them and truly love them? Or do you treat them like little rugrats and push them to the side as you pass by? Jesus said we must become like little children if we want to enter the kingdom of Heaven. I submit that we will never become like little children if we can't stand having them around. Are children truly important to you and your church, or are they merely tolerated? They are important to Jesus.

## Day 8: DRAW CLOSER TO GOD

By Pastor Arlis Shelor

Faith Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

We have all heard that we need to "Draw closer to God." We have God's word in bounded pages, and we have the leadership of the "Holy Spirit." We have those Awe Moments that have a broadening effect on us.

Enoch lived 365 years, and Enoch walked with God: and he was not, for God took him. The path that Enoch took that day was a path he was familiar with. On that day, he was not to be found, for God took Enoch with him. What an "Awe Moment."

How can we have a "moment with God"? We can intentionally set aside time for quiet reflection, prayer, and Bible readings.

Share with God your gratitude for who God is to you. During every day, look at the things God created. Be mindful of His presence in nature. Sense the closeness and connection with the Divine. Take time to see God's handiwork in the world around you.

Engage with your thoughts and feelings toward our God.

**Psalm 46:1: "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."**

## Day 9: WWJS

By Pastor Michael Fain

Five Forks Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

Read John 1:19-34

I grew up in the '80s. If you did as well, I am sure you have ingrained in your mind some of the slang that was popular at the time. Remember these?—Awesome, Lamé, For Sure, I Gotta Bounce, Excellent (one of my favorites from Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure). I loved the movies of the '80s as well. One of my favorites was Back to the Future. One of the words that Marty McFly kept saying over and over was "Heavy." Remember that? I could go on and on about growing up in the '80s and '90s. That was truly my decade—big hair, parachute pants, acid-wash jeans, Aqua Net, Sun-In hair spray, nights at the skating rink, going to the mall, the arcade, etc.

Today, as believers, we say, "God is good"—"All the time." That is a great saying and an even better message. One of the phrases that began in the '90s was "WWJD." I am sure you all remember that. "What Would Jesus Do" is still part of our vocabulary. But let me ask you: Have you ever thought to yourself, "WWJS"? What does that mean? What Would Jesus Say? What if we wore bracelets with those letters on them? We would look down at them, not only to think about what Jesus would do but also what He would say. What I mean is, what would He say about you and me?

It is not only important for us to be like Jesus in this world, but it is also important for us to think about what Jesus would say about us—particularly to others in this world. If you had to write your own obituary, what would you say about yourself? How would you want others to remember you? If Jesus were to speak at your funeral, what would He say about you?

I love what Jesus said about John the Baptist—John 5:32-35. In this passage, Jesus tells all who have ears to hear that He came to finish the works His Father gave Him to do. Without Him finishing this work, we would have no hope. We would be a people most pitied, as Paul would write. I love what Jesus said about John. He called John a "lamp that burned and gave light." He also later said that "no one born of woman was greater than John." What was John's secret to success in the eyes of Jesus? It's no secret, and it is simple—John 3:30: "He must become greater; I must become less."

In life, most people measure greatness by how high up the ladder they climb. Even in ministry, people do that. The religious leaders in Jesus's day believed that. They counted every rung as they moved closer to the top. Many of them believed that the more they had, the more it was evidence of God's approval in their lives. It is easy for us to fall into that mindset. We measure our lives by their length—by how many likes we get, particularly on social media, how many



followers we have, the position we hold, etc. We look at things—what we live in, the land we own, and money (which becomes lucre when we focus on it)—and it is easy to allow these things to determine our greatness. This happens when we take our eyes off Jesus.

Why did Jesus say that no one was greater than John? John 1:19-34 gives us the answer. The religious leaders came to John and questioned him. They asked several times who he was and why he was doing what he was doing. They questioned his authority. He had separated himself from the legalistic, political, economic, and social control that the Sanhedrin had established. The Sadducees and Pharisees had turned God's house into a den of thieves, which is why Jesus cleared the temple on two occasions.

John's response to them was, "I am a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" John was humble. He spoke the truth. He didn't care what others thought of him. John's life was short, but that doesn't mean he didn't fulfill the plan and purpose God had for him.

Even though John's life was short, he was a lamp for the Lord. Jesus said the church is to be a lamp: "In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in Heaven."

You may feel that you are insignificant—that you don't matter. But you do! Jesus died for you! And we live for Him. The Almighty Creator of the universe not only works in His people but also works through His people. What an honor! What a privilege! How humbling this should be for all of us!

Don't hide your lamp under a bowl. Let your light shine for others to see! The Word of God says that we all are a "vapor, a mist." "To the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years is like a day." This means that what we do in this life will carry on into the next.

Jesus said, "Yet whoever is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." Why did Jesus say that? Because we have the finished work of the cross! We are citizens of the kingdom of God! We are priests of the Most High God. You matter! You have been given gifts to minister to others and to build each other up.

Scripture says, "Since we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit." To do this, we must empty ourselves of the desires of this world. Does the road in your life need to be straightened? Are there mountaintops that need to be brought down? Are there high places that you have sought? Maybe you have valleys in your life now that need to be raised up. Fix your eyes on Jesus, the Pioneer and Perfecter of your faith. He will lead the way!

Greatness in this life comes when Jesus becomes greater in our lives and we become less!

During Lent, leading up to Passion Week, we often look at that week in Jesus's life—what He did, the things He said, and the people He came in contact with. From His triumphal entry to His resurrection, we focus our hearts and minds on Him. We should do this every day. But as we prepare for Passion Week, we should also reflect on the several days of John's testimony about Jesus.

## **Day 10: The Raising of Lazarus**

**By Pastor George Larue**

**Faith Wesleyan**

**Read John 11:17-20**

Number of Steps: _____
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We all know the Biblical account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead. Jesus knew what He was doing, but no one else understood why He didn't take immediate action to heal Lazarus. Granted, He could have done it from where He was, but He chose to delay coming to Mary and Martha. This devotion focuses on Mary and Martha's reactions.

John 11:17-20 [17](#) When Jesus arrived, He found that Lazarus had already spent four days in the tomb. [18](#) Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, a little less than two miles away, [19](#) and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them in the loss of their brother. [20](#) When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him, but Mary stayed home.



Why does Martha go out to meet Jesus while Mary stays put? Is it simply that Martha is the more active of the two? Is it because she is the one who gets things done, while Mary likes to sit ([Luke 10:38-42](#))? Maybe. Or maybe there is something else going on.

While Martha exhibits hope through theological insight, Mary's interaction with Jesus is noticeably different. While Martha immediately goes out to meet Jesus, Mary doesn't go until Martha gets her ([John 11:28](#)). Then it is striking that Mary says the same thing that her sister said to Jesus: "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died" ([John 11:32](#)).

Mary did not entertain the idea that Jesus could do anything now that death had come.

Jesus's response to Mary also contrasts with Martha. After Martha expressed hope, Jesus comforted her with the amazing words that Lazarus would rise again, and that Jesus is the resurrection and the life. But what is His response to Mary? There is no word of comfort. There is no theological promise. He says, "Where have you laid him?" ([John 11:34](#)).

Given the facts from scripture, I must ask, "We all know that Jesus is coming. Will we go out and meet him, or will we sit still in the house, feeling sorry for ourselves and our families?" Let me encourage you to take as many as possible to meet Jesus. He is coming!

## **Day 11: Testimony of the Doves**

**By Pastor Herb Shaffer**

**First Wesleyan Roanoke**

**Read Luke 2:22-40**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

What comes to mind when you think of doves? Peaceful? Weddings? Purity? Funerals? How about in the Bible? One appears prior to God giving a covenant with Noah. This is where we get the picture of peace. When the dove returns with the olive branch, it demonstrates God's peace with mankind. The dove also appears when God gives His covenant with Abraham, but this time as a sacrifice.

After Jesus' birth, Mary and Joseph took Jesus to the temple to perform the standard sacrifice for purification. Normally, the sacrifice after a child was born was a lamb, but if someone couldn't afford a lamb, pigeons or doves were accepted. They purchased two doves, showing their poverty. It must have been humbling being unable to afford the normal sacrifice, especially after such an important event as the first-born son. Yet would anything else better represent our Christ who came for us and humbled himself for us? Our Messiah, humbly born in a stable, would humbly be brought to the temple with nothing more than two doves to sacrifice. These doves, much like the stable that he was born in... declared that Jesus' life would be marked by humble service.

Was there another reason, besides poverty, why they did not offer a sacrificial lamb? Perhaps a deeper reason? If you think about it, why would they offer a lamb for purification when Mary just birthed the Son of God, the Lamb that would end all sacrifice, the very Lamb of God? These doves were revealing the New Covenant. Perhaps the Spirit whispered to her that a lamb was not to be her offering at that moment, that the time for her to offer up a precious lamb would come later. It is through that Lamb that we can have real peace with God.

## **Day 12 The Vine & Branches**

**By Kylee de Pineda**

**Shenandoah District Administrator**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**John 15:5 – "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."**

Following the Passover meal, when Jesus knew His hour had come (John 13:1), He made His last I AM declaration: "I AM the vine." He vividly depicted the relationship of the branches to the vine and the role of the gardener (John 15). A short time afterward, Jesus was arrested and tried, then later crucified. With each agonizing breath that Jesus took while on

the cross, as the wood splinters penetrated the whip lacerations in His back when He pushed Himself up to gasp for air, was He reminded of His last "I AM" statement? Inhale, "I am the vine." Exhale, "you are the branches." As blood-drops rolled down His face from the wounds inflicted by the crown of thorns, did He envision the juice dripping from the fruit that those who remain in Him will bear? The True Vine willingly sacrificed Himself to give the branches the privilege to be in the vine and bear fruit.

The Greek word used for remains is *meno*, meaning to be and remain united with him, one with him in heart, mind, and will. The command Jesus gives is twofold: we must remain in Him, and He in us. It is crucial that we not only surrender our all to Him but, in turn, invite Him to dwell within us and be united with us because, without Him, we are nothing. We, as connected branches, must draw our sustenance from the life-sustaining power of the vine.

**Are you remaining in the True Vine and He in you, bearing fruit that will last?**

### **Day 13: Let Your Chains Go**

**By Nicholas Conn**

**Penn Forest Wesleyan**

**Read Luke 8:39**

**Location: Gadara-** Today we have traveled 65 miles and reached Gadara.

*"Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.*

Has there been something in your life that you feel has been holding you back? Do you feel like you can never let it go, as if you're chained to it—much like Marley in *A Christmas Carol*? It's time to break those chains, just as Jesus set free the man who was demon-possessed in Luke 8:26-39.

There was a time in my life when I wrestled with unforgiveness. I felt like I could never release the anger I had toward my brother. That unforgiveness and anger were holding me back from experiencing the true joy of life and from giving back to the world in the way God intended.

We all have things that weigh us down, but as we walk through this season of Lent together, I want you to remember what Luke 8 says:

*"When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at His feet, shouting at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, don't torture me!' For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places."*

This man was bound—just as many of us have been or still are. If you feel like you are chained by something in your life, remember this: The One who can set you free is Jesus.

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Day 14: The Wedding at Cana**

**By Pastor Melody Smith**

**The Gathering**

**Read John 2:1-11**

The first public miracle of Jesus in John's gospel takes place at the wedding in Cana. The celebration is in danger of coming to a screeching halt because the wine is gone—a social faux pas! Jesus miraculously turns water into wine, proving that he is the source of life. The way that he accomplishes the task tells us something about how God works through people.

Jesus wanted the cooperation of men in this miracle. He could have filled the pots himself. He could just have easily created the liquid in the pots. But he knew that if the servants shared in the task, they would share in the blessing. It was

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Jesus, not the servants, who turned the water into wine; they were simply obedient in following his instructions. He told them to fill pots with water. It didn't make sense, but they were obedient, and Jesus was able to work through that. There are times that he calls us to do things that don't make sense from a human perspective, but if we are obedient, he is able to work through us in miraculous ways. The servants got to share in the joy of the miracle because they were willing to do what Jesus commanded.

They were also especially blessed because they obeyed to the fullest. They filled the waterpots up to the brim. If they had been half-hearted in their efforts and only put a little water in, there would only have been half as much wine. God is able to work through us according to our obedience and our level of commitment to his call. He doesn't need us to accomplish his work, but he chooses to partner with us.

**What is he calling you to do? Are you willing to do it even if it doesn't make sense? And how full are you filling your waterpots?**

### **Day 15: Abide**

**By Jennifer Miller**

**Emmanuel Wesleyan**

#### **Read John 15:5**

The word "abide" has been following me around for the last few years. It has shown up in different ways, at different times, and taken on new meanings. God continues to show me new ways of thinking about abiding.

God has previously shown me that when I abide in Him, and He abides in me, I will bear much fruit (John 15:5). But He just recently gave me another truth: When we abide by His word, we will also bear fruit.

Abide in. Abide by.

Abide can mean to remain, dwell, continue on with, or be present with. and all those meanings are beautiful when we think about abiding in and with Him. It means that we can stay with Jesus, and He will stay with us. Apart from Him, we can do nothing. But by remaining with Him, we can bear fruit for His glory and the good of others.

But abide can also mean to follow, to keep to. Or, as He pointed out to me so clearly recently, abide can mean to OBEY. Luke 8:15 says, when we hear His word and keep it, we will bear fruit. At first, I looked at "keep it" as obeying it. Then, I saw it as meaning, "keep it close." In other words, when God's word resides in us and guides us, we will "produce a harvest."

The more we abide in Him and His word, and the more room they have within us to abide, the more fruit He will bear within us. Are you making room for Him to reside? Are you using His word as your guide?

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### **Day 16: Jesus calls the first Disciples**

**By Kassidy Spencer**

**Parkway Church on the Mountain**

#### **Read Matthew 4:18-22**

Growing up as young Jewish men, Simon and Andrew would have spent their whole lives praying for the opportunity to become students of a rabbi one day. Their parents, too, would have prayed throughout their childhood that they would grow up to be students—or, even greater, teachers. If this did not come to pass, they were essentially expected to carry on the family business and hope that their own children might one day become students of a rabbi.

So when Jesus said, "Follow me," there was no hesitation in their minds. This moment was everything they had longed for. It would be like someone walking up to you in Walmart and saying, "I will pay off all of your student loans and all of

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your children's student loans." The only right answer is YES. These young men had been waiting their whole lives for an opportunity like this.

But notice—Jesus didn't just say, "Follow me." He added, "And I will make you fishers of men." Jesus had a plan to transform these fishermen into laborers for the spiritual harvest. He was ready to teach them everything they needed to know and then send them out to do the work of ministry. One might argue that these disciples had no earthly clue what their lives were about to become. Yet, they responded willingly, quickly, and emphatically with YES.

**What would it look like for our hearts to respond to Jesus with that same excitement and obedience?**

## **Day 17: Look to Me and Live**

**By Jake Headley**

Number of Steps: _____
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### **The Gathering**

**"Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in Him may have eternal life." – John 3:14-15**

I love youth ministry. I love working with students and watching them grow into the people God has created them to be. Teens are a gift from God. But, as any parent or teacher knows, working with teens comes with its challenges. For instance, they're always hungry; their growing bodies turn them into ravenous wolves. Hungry teens are scary. Also, they are often convinced that they know everything, and they are exceptionally gifted at expressing every little thing that is "not right" in the most dramatic way possible.

For these reasons and more, I am fully convinced that the children of Israel were basically a bunch of teenagers. They consistently chose to go their own way, constantly searched for the next best thing, and complained the moment they were uncomfortable. They grumbled when they were thirsty, and they grumbled when they were hungry. And yet, God was always faithful to provide everything they needed.

As they neared the end of their wandering and were told they had to take a longer route instead of a shortcut, they threw a full-blown temper tantrum and spoke against God and Moses. They complained about being hungry and thirsty, accused them of leading them into the wilderness to die, and, to top it all off, they declared that the food was disgusting.

God, having been repeatedly rejected and disrespected by His people, responded with an act of judgment. Time and time again, He had withheld His hand, but this time, He let it go. He sent poisonous snakes into the camp, and many people were bitten and died. At first glance, this might seem harsh, but we must remember that He is a holy, holy, holy God—the Ruler of the Universe. For people like them, like us, to question, disrespect, or blatantly disobey Him is a crime deserving of far more than death.

At this moment, the Israelites had a rare moment of clarity. They finally realized that they were the problem. They were the disobedient ones. They had brought this upon themselves. And they had a choice: they could either dig in, refuse to acknowledge their sin, and hide in it, or they could be honest and repent. They chose repentance. They begged Moses—the very man they had just spoken against—to intercede for them before God. And in mercy, Moses did.

And God listened. He told Moses to make a bronze snake and place it on a pole. Anyone who looked at it would be healed. Moses obeyed, and it happened just as God had said. But notice—God didn't take away the snakes. There was still punishment, still consequence for their sin, but He offered them a way out.

When Nicodemus came to Jesus looking for answers, Jesus responded: "You know the story of the serpent in the wilderness. Just as Moses lifted up the serpent, I too will be lifted up, and the healing I offer will be for eternal life. Look to me and live."

Jesus is giving us the same call today. We have sinned against God. We deserve death and eternal separation from Him. We deserve hell. But if we can be honest with ourselves—if we can admit that we are powerless over sin and in need of a Savior—God has offered us a way out. We can choose to turn away from our sin and look to Him.

Will you look to Him and live today?

**And for those who already have—are you willing to do whatever it takes to show Christ to others?**

**Day 18 Grateful for The Path to The Cross**

**By Pastor Thereasa Blyskal**

**Jordantown Wesleyan**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**JOHN 14:6-Jesus answered, "I am the way and truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**

God is so faithful to us as we travel through life. He created us, continually draws us to himself, leads us to the foot of the cross, and gives us the freedom to choose his offer of eternal life or not. We may choose yes, no, or wait, but God never stops his work in us. Praise His Name!!!

We may walk in different areas of life and each one experiences various situations as we go. No matter where we end up, God promises to help us as we go on from there. Proverbs 3:6 says, "in all your ways submit to him and he will make your paths straight."

In Mark 4:1-8, starting with the word listen, Jesus taught using a parable of a farmer sowing seed on many different types of ground. As the seed spread and found rest, many different scenarios took place. He ended with the word "hear. Will we hear Him?"

Read God's Word

Request Gods Will

Receive Gods Way

It's good to prepare the "soil" of our hearts as we go, being ready to take in what God so graciously passes on to us. We have many opportunities, any time we need to access God, and he always invites us to meet him at the cross where the ground is level, open access to all who seek Him, He is kind and merciful. He is waiting for us to come.

**Will we share with others and lend a hand up or a path out?**

**Day 19: Blessings in our Suffering**

**By Pastor Lisa Palmer**

**Clearview Wesleyan**

**Read Mark 8:22-26**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location: Betsaida-** Today we have traveled 95 miles and reached Bethsaida.

In most ancient cultures, blindness carried with it a stigma. It intensified poverty and insecurities, as the person would lack the ability to work and provide for his family. It created isolation and loneliness; like lepers, a blind man would be devoid of human touch. On this occasion, the blind man was brought to Jesus without regard for his well-being. In fact, the people only hoped to see a sensational feat by the miracle worker. But Jesus did the unthinkable. He touched the man. Taking his hand, Jesus led him outside the village where he would place His hands not once, but twice, on the man's face and diseased eyes. Our English word for sympathy is derived from the Greek translation of this word, touched. The laying on of hands did more than indicate an intentional understanding of the man's plight but showed that Jesus had a complete understanding of the seriousness of the situation. Significantly, the use of the word "touch" carried with it a blessing. Jesus not only healed man's vision, but by laying His hands on him, He conveyed a blessing upon him.

This passage gives us a glimpse into the heart and compassion of Jesus, who knows our sufferings. II Corinthians 1:5 reminds us that as "we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too." Somehow, our earthly sufferings escort us to the throne of God, where we are touched by His tender mercies and find healing and blessings. Jesus' compassion was clearly seen as he walked on the earth and stepped into people's struggles. You can be confident that He will carry you, too.

Who tells the sun to rise every morning?

Colors the sky with the shades of His glory?

Wakes us with mercy and love? Jesus does.

Who holds the orphan and comforts the widow?

Cries for injustice, feels every sorrow?

Carries the pain of His children? Jesus does.

Jesus Does. Songwriters: Andrew Bergthold / Edmond Martin Cash / Franni Cash / Martin Cash / Scott Mctyeire Cash / Kyle Reed Briskin

## Day 20: A Certain Point of View

By Pastor Paul MacGregor

Penn Forest Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Hebrews 12:2 "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer, and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."**

"What I told you is true, from a certain point of view." This famous line, delivered by Obi-Wan Kenobi in *Return of the Jedi*, could be seen as him covering up a lie of omission or twisting the facts. (Spoilers ahead—though if you haven't seen the movie by now, you're 42 years too late. Goodness, I'm old.)

You see, Obi-Wan was explaining to Luke why he had said that Darth Vader killed his father when, in fact, Darth Vader *GASP* was his father. Obi-Wan's reasoning was that when Anakin Skywalker turned to the Dark Side and became Darth Vader, the person he once was ceased to exist. From Obi-Wan's point of view, his former friend and student had died.

Okay, that's enough *Star Wars* talk. If you're still with me, let's move on to another kind of "entertainment"—online dash cam videos. Dash cams are certainly useful, as they help law enforcement and insurance companies determine fault in an accident. But the current trend of posting these videos online has revealed one undeniable truth: no matter how clear-cut it seems to you who is at fault, there will always be at least one person in the comments who disagrees.

Sometimes, it's hard to see things from a different perspective—whether it's an argument with a friend or spouse, a political debate with a coworker, or even our thoughts about the homeless man on the corner. We don't just *think* we are right; we *know* we are right—until we find out we were wrong.

Throughout history, people have even used the Bible to justify unjust and clearly wrong beliefs, such as slavery and racism. So how do we know if our point of view is truly the correct one? We must fix our eyes on Jesus and ask Him to make His perspective clear. How does He see your friend, your spouse, your coworker, or that homeless man? Once we understand His point of view, we must align ourselves with it and see others as He does—as His beloved creation.

**Who is someone you need to ask God to help you see from a different point of view?**

## Day 21: Fishers of Men

By Pastor Joshua Householder

Christ Community

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Isaiah 6:8: "Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I. Send me!'"**

**Location: Capernaum-** Today we have traveled 105 miles and reached Capernaum.

Simon, James, and John had met Jesus before, and now, even though they are exhausted from a night of fruitless fishing, Peter agreed to take Jesus out a little so he could teach. Then, Jesus asked him to do something he thought was futile, but Peter agreed. He chose faith over doubt and his willingness to serve opened the door for what happened next.

One would imagine that this would be a happy moment, but Peter's response was from the heart; he was broken. The closer we draw to God, the more we recognize our own unworthiness. And yet, Jesus' response is the same. "Do not be afraid..." John wrote, "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear..." Jesus' love for us is perfect, and in it, we find the heart of the gospel message, which we find in John 3:16-17.

We must follow Jesus wherever he leads, even when where he leads doesn't make sense at the time. There will be times when we want to say, "I'm too tired." Or, if we're being honest, "I don't want to." But here's the thing about Jesus' encounter with those who would become his disciples: he really wasn't asking, was he? He knew what needed to happen and when, so he got on the boat. It was up to Peter, James, and John to trust him and obey.

They decided to leave everything and follow Jesus. They were completely sold out to their call to be his disciples; to be fishers of men. We also must be sincere in our devotion. We have a divine commission to "go and make disciples." We know that evangelism should be at the heart of everything we do. The question remains then, are we truly willing to go and do it?

**Day 22 – He can calm your storm.**

Number of Steps: _____
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**By Pastor Randy Garner**

**Shenandoah Assistant District Superintendent**

**Read Mark 4:35-41 (NKJV)**

**Location: Sea of Galilee:** Today we have traveled 110 miles and reached the Sea of Galilee.

The story of Jesus calming the storm is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

**35 On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side." 36 Now, when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him. 37 And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat so that it was already filling. 38 But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?" 39 Then He arose and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace, be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. 40 But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?" 41 And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"**

Reflection:

Let His peace calm your spirit today.

Life is full of storms, some big, some small. But no matter the size, if it's your storm, it is significant.

The key is this: as long as Jesus is at the helm of your boat, the captain of your life, He has the power to calm the storm. No matter how loud or overwhelming it may seem, He is the storm calmer.

Trust Him. He is in control. The real question is, is He in control of your life?

Remember to cast your cares on Him because He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7).

And obey Him! If the wind and waves obey His command, shouldn't we do the same? As the old hymn says, "Trust and obey, for there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey."

**Prayer: Heavenly Father, I pray that anyone who reads this today finds comfort in trusting and obeying You and in relying on You to calm their storms. I ask that You speak peace into their hearts and spirits, soothing whatever storm they may be facing. May they experience the full joy that comes from trusting and obeying You and the happiness that flows from Your presence. Amen!**



## Day 23 Jesus Walks on Water

By Pastor Glenn Robinson

Crosspoint Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Mark 6:48b - "...he came towards them early in the morning, walking on the sea. He intended to pass them by."**

What is Mark telling us about Jesus? He wants to show us how Jesus demonstrates to his disciples his identity as the God of the Old Testament. Mark alludes to Job 9:8, "who alone stretched out the heavens and trampled the waves of the sea." Job is responding to his friend's explanation about his suffering. His response is with a description of who God is and the things only God can do.

What's interesting is that many scholars have translated 'the Sea' into this verse as the mythical sea dragon that was thought to dwell there. In his commentary on Job, scholar David Clines translates it as "he tramples upon the sea monster's back." In ancient times, the sea or the abyss was often viewed as the place where demons dwelt. The logic, then, is that if God is the one who tramples the waves of the sea, and Jesus is walking on the sea, Jesus must be God in the flesh. It would also appear He is to be seen as victorious over the abyss and the enemy within it.

Mark is not finished yet helping us make these connections. At the end of v.48, it says, "He intended to pass them by." At first glance, you might think Jesus is either ignoring the disciples or playing a cruel joke. Instead, Mark is pointing us back to Job 9. Just three verses after describing God trampling the waves of the sea, it says, "Look, he passes by me, and I do not see him; he moves on, but I do not perceive him" (Job 9:11).

Again, Job is describing something only God has done and one's inability to comprehend his mysterious presence and power fully. We find something similar in Exodus, where Moses prayed to the Lord, "Show me your glory." And the Lord said to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before you, and will proclaim before you the name, 'The LORD,.' But you cannot see my face, for no one shall see me and live. So the Lord hid Moses in the cleft of the rock on the mountain, covered him as he passed by, and was only able to see his back (Exodus 33:17-23).

Jesus is doing what only God can do. He is walking on the sea and intending to pass them by, revealing to them that He is divine, the Son of God.

### Challenge Question:

**What is your response when Jesus reveals Himself to you, and what can get in the way of your ability to perceive his presence?**

## Day 24: Sink or Swim

Pastor Perry Lundy

Penn Forest Wesleyan

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Read John 2:1-11**

**Location-Cana-** Today we have traveled 120 miles and reached Cana.

I am four years old dipping my toes in the cool water of a small mountain lake. My younger brother is playing in the warm moist sand of Hungry Mother State Park. The 'shallows' or little kids swimming area was full of screaming splashing toddlers, but my eyes fixed on the barrier, a row of a dozen rock columns joined together by heavy chains. Just beyond the chains was the deep water where grownups swim.

"Don't go into the water until your daddy takes you," Mom warned me.

I inched closer, the water now covering my feet. Suddenly, strong hands grabbed my arms and lifted me up to my dad's shoulder. Off into the water, he waded through the shallows and past the chains into the 'deep.'

"You ready son?" Dad shouted.

Before I could answer, Dad raised me above his head and tossed me into the water.

Splashing and spitting water, I called out, "Okay, Daddy, come get me!" Dad was almost to the beach, leaving me alone. "Time to learn how to swim son: he shouted. But I'm too little, daddy, I'm only four!" I cried out. "Swim to the chains," he shouted.

For what seemed like hours, I splashed and swallowed half the lake and made it to the chains. But I had somehow managed to swim!

Life is about choices, which often come suddenly without warning and can be confusing. Jesus's first miracle (John 2:1-11) was not dramatic or awe-inspiring, yet Jesus chose a day of celebration to kick start his greater mission. Jesus was attending a wedding when his mother informed him of a wine shortage. His reply in John 2:4 implies he has a more important purpose in his near future. Why, then, does he seem to give in and change water into wine? John 2:11, "...and his disciples believed in him". Dear believer, sink or swim? Swim, swim, swim!

## **Day 25: The Nazareth Syndrome**

**Pastor Sandra Johnson**

**Three Strand Wesleyan**

**Read Mark 6:1-6**

**Location: Nazareth-** Today we have traveled 125 miles and reached Nazareth

Acclaimed actor John Krasinski, best known for his role as Jim Halpert in The Office, shared a story about the blindness of familiarity. A passerby greeted him with "John, from The Office!" His daughter, confused, asked if the man was a coworker. When Krasinski said no, she retorted, "Why are you lying? He just said he knows you from The Office." Later, while first watching The Office with his daughters, his six-year-old refused to believe it was him on screen, repeatedly insisting, "That's not you." Krasinski concluded that his daughters believe he is just trying to make them think he is an actor.

This reminds us of the people of Nazareth. When Jesus returned to his hometown, they already had preconceived notions of who he was, the carpenter, Mary's son. They were offended by his ministry, despite His amazing wisdom and miracles. They missed out on many blessings because of their limiting perspective. They couldn't see the Messiah where the carpenter stood. Did they believe he was trying to make them think he was a prophet?

Lent is the perfect time to examine this "error of familiarity." As the saying goes, "Sometimes we are so focused on what we know that we miss what we are about to discover." Let's approach the familiar stories of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection with fresh eyes and anticipation. Let us be open to learning more, going deeper, and connecting more intimately with our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior.

**How will you open the eyes of your heart this Lent, that the well-worn paths of scripture might reveal unexpected blooms of truth, and the voice of God whisper new secrets in the quiet spaces between the words on the page?**

## **Day 26: Higher Ground**

**By Pastor Adam Watts**

**Parkway Wesleyan Staunton**

**Read Matthew 17:1-9**

**Location: Mt. Tabor-** Today we have traveled 130 miles and reached Mt. Tabor.

As we reflect on the account of our Lord's transfiguration in Matthew 17, there are many valuable truths to be considered as we journey through this meaningful season of Lent. For just a moment, let us take on the position of the disciples and consider the reality of their experience on the mount of transfiguration.

James, John, and Peter had been with Jesus for quite some time and were no strangers to seeing the miraculous and powerful displays of God's glory through their Lord. However, what made this experience a little bit different is the

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intimate and yet prominent reality of the life-changing power of Jesus...in their lives. The message of Christ to all who will receive Him is one of change and transformation of the entire being...a personal calling to conform to His image and reflect HIS glory through our lives.

The disciples were transformed in many ways as they beheld, perhaps, the most glorious experience in their earthly journey with Jesus. Particularly, they were changed in their understanding of God's purpose, perspective, and power in their lives. Their purpose as witnesses and messengers of God's eternal kingdom was solidified as they watched Jesus transfigured before their very eyes. Their perspective was called to a higher plane of vision, seeing that their Lord truly possessed dominion over every part of creation and that whatever things seemed important in their lives before this experience was now far inferior to knowing Christ in all His glory. The culmination of this life-changing event was the assurance of God's power in their lives. Watching, witnessing, and worshipping...the disciples found themselves face-to-face with the fulfillment of God's mighty power that was shared with them through Jesus.

The simple truth is that the same transforming power that Peter, James, and John witnessed on the mount of transfiguration is still available to us today. God wants to change our purpose to be in alignment with His eternal plan. God wants to elevate our perspective to see Him for who He is and not be distracted by the lesser and lower things of life. Ultimately, God has personally called each of us to be emptied of ourselves so that we may be filled with his power.

As we seek more of our Savior during this meaningful time of year, may we take the posture of the disciples and humbly offer our lives to Jesus. May our Lord transform us as we respond to His call and take the journey to higher ground.

## **Day 27: The Woman at the Well**

**By Brianne Clemmer**

**Penn Forest Wesleyan**

**Read John 4:7-31**

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**Location: Sychar-** Today we have traveled 135 miles and reached the well at Sychar.

Almost everyone knows the story of the woman at the well. She was the town pariah; someone the other women didn't want to associate with. Sure, the choices she had made in life were her own doing, but that doesn't mean she didn't regret the places they took her. It's amazing how fast one wrong choice can snowball, and all of a sudden, you're in a pit you can't seem to get out of.

So, she had come up with her own kind of defense. She made a habit of protecting herself from their scorn, going out of her way to avoid the crowds of the day and adjusting her schedule so she didn't have to face them. And maybe they didn't openly ridicule her. The Bible doesn't say they threw rotten tomatoes at her and yelled curses. Maybe it was more of what they didn't say: the cold shoulder she received, the clear lack of warmth and welcome from the other women as they went about their daily chores.

Isn't that something that is easy to be guilty of without actually meaning to be hurtful? Maybe we feel uncomfortable around someone because we know who they are and what they're like. Or, at least, we think we do. Maybe we've heard just enough of their story to give us pause, so we feel awkward around them and don't know what to say. Instead of making an attempt to reach out and show a little bit of Christ's love, we take the easy way out and avoid them altogether. We don't mean to be cruel or unkind, but we are.

Jesus knew this woman and her story. He didn't let the truth of her past or the gossip about her deter him. He welcomed her as she was, sharing his love freely. Jesus wasn't put off by her clear "back off man" attitude. He knew what she needed, and he knew he could offer it to her.

No one will argue that we certainly are not Jesus. But we do have something to offer the people in our lives that we encounter who may not fit neatly into our comfort zones. Those who aren't "our people." It's easy to stay in our lane and avoid reaching out to someone who comes across as prickly or not easy to get along with. And yes, when approaching someone new to us, you don't go in with both barrels and attack them with the gospel immediately. But sometimes, an initial gesture of kindness, of accepting someone different, is all it takes to open the door for them to

realize you're not there to brow-beat them with the gospel but that you truly care and have a genuine interest in their well-being.

Building that relationship can be the first step in showing someone that God is there. That he loves them. That they're not alone. That regardless of their circumstances, there is hope. Take a chance and reach out, show kindness, offer the living water to a thirsty soul, and let God do the work.

## **Day 28 Mary and Martha**

**By Pastor Jessica Degener**

**Three Strand Wesleyan**

**Read Luke 10:38-42**

The story of Mary and Martha is familiar to many of us. Martha was serving Jesus and other guests in her house, which was more than just good hospitality; it was culturally expected, while Mary was sitting at Jesus's feet - learning, listening, and even going against cultural expectations to do so. Martha's heart to serve wasn't necessarily wrong or sinful; Mary was just choosing the better thing. These two sisters are in such contrast, yet we still see this contrast today within the church body in the tension of serving and resting at Jesus's feet. Just like in the case of Martha, there will be many opportunities to participate in the activities of the church, but are we focusing on the activities of the church over spending time with Jesus? This season is busy. We just came out of the holidays where we have lots of extra connection opportunities or services and then run straight into preparing for Valentine's Day, and then usually something around St. Patrick's Day, and then straight into Easter and then the end of the school year. Even if you don't help plan all of the events/services, you may attend or participate in them. It's not bad, but it is a lot. During this season of Lent, as we focus more on Jesus and his ministry, his death and resurrection, let us remember that he has invited all of us to sit and rest at his feet. May this season be one where we intentionally slow down & pause, maybe even potentially go against the cultural expectation of serving or attending events busily and instead respond to the invitation to rest at Jesus's feet. Where in your life are you putting serving or participating in church events above your relationship with God?

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## **Day 29: Surrender to Christ**

**By Pastor Todd A. Conn**

**Penn Forest Wesleyan**

**Read Matthew 26:17-19**

From 1992 to 2012, my wife and I served several communities as foster parents. Over the course of twenty years, we fostered fifty-four children and youth. Even though we could not have children biologically, we managed to fill our quiver with seven adopted children. Throughout those years, many interesting stories came to pass, as you might imagine.

One such story involved three young boys who came to us with very little worldly belongings. We purchased all what we called "Sunday Go to Meeting" clothes, including ties. They were so thrilled to have those ties! When we arrived at church that Sunday morning, part of the service was dedicated to presenting our tithes to the Lord. Horrified, all three boys held their ties with both hands and said, "I don't want to give my tie."

As the disciples strived to serve Jesus during the Passover in Matthew 26, at least two people had to surrender their agendas to that of the Lord. The disciples had to follow Jesus' instructions to approach the homeowner for the use of his home. The homeowner had to follow the Lord's instructions to provide a place for Jesus and the disciples to celebrate Passover. In this season of Lent, we are reminded that many Christians struggle with accepting the Lord's forgiveness. Part of accepting Jesus' forgiveness is submission to God's love and will. Accepting God's forgiveness means submitting to God's love for us by being His child. Accepting God's will means submitting to God's will by doing what God wants us to do.

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## **Day 30: Purpose Behind the Pain**

**By Pastor Dominic Alvey**

**Brookhill Wesleyan**

**Read James 1:2-4**

The season of Lent helps me put a focus on what we can do without. As I prayerfully seek to prepare for Easter and the sacrifice Christ made. I look to examine myself yearly and invite the Holy Spirit to help me see the areas in my life that I need God's help to cut out. I have found that God has a way of making room for the things that matter to Him in me if I willingly submit and, through His power, work to see what it is in my life that I need to lose for His best. In my personal experience with Christ, I have come to appreciate the trials, testing, and spiritual struggles that God allows to show up in my life. I don't know why my personality is this way, but unless something is hard, I have a difficult time making the needed changes. I know I want to be more disciplined; I desire consistency; I say that I want eyes that see like our Heavenly Fathers and a heart that loves like Christ. But without things going wrong, I found I can become complacent, and I don't make room for the Holy Spirit to come in and use God's word to dissect the things in my life that need to be removed for God's best. As I strive for spiritual maturity and full submission of my will to God, I have been joy-filled to find that it is through the hard times in my life that God has produced steadfastness to His will for my life. This has brought about completion in many areas of my character that is only possible through God's patience, goodness, and instruction. So, I find that I resonate with James and "Count it All Joy" for the Pain because I know that our God never lets anything go to waste.

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Day 31: The Promises of the Cross**

**By Pastor Matt Reynolds**

**Emmanuel Wesleyan**

**Read 1 Peter 2:24**

Did you know that the cross of Jesus brings with it promises? Let me tell you about the promises of the cross.

The cross promises hope. So many people have no hope. No hope for the things of their past, no hope for their present, and no hope for their future, but the cross promises hope! Hope for their lives, that they can be different, hope for the hurt and pain of the past, and hope for their future! "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful." For the hopeless, the cross promises hope!

The cross promises healing, a total and complete healing of body, mind, and heart. The healing of the cross is, first of all, spiritual. The cross heals the broken, sin-sick soul and brings forgiveness and salvation. But the cross also brings physical healing and emotional healing and we know this because Isaiah first tells us and then Peter reminds us, "By His wounds you have been healed." For those that are sick in body, mind, emotions, or soul the cross promises healing!

The cross promises Heaven. Jesus came to die for our sins so we could experience His forgiveness now but also so that we could have the promise of Heaven for the next life. This was God's plan and Jesus' purpose the whole time. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." The cross promises Heaven to those who believe and live for Jesus.

The cross of Jesus not only provides salvation for our souls, but it provides even more than we realize with its promises of hope, healing, and Heaven. What promise of the cross do you need today?

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

## Day 32: Who Do You Serve?

By Rick Chase

Abundant Life Wesleyan

**"For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ." Galatians 1:10 NKJV**

Whom are we serving, God or man? Are we acting in such a manner that men will like us, or are we acting like Jesus, knowing this world will hate us? Is our goal to bring glory to God or to ourselves? These are important questions we should ask ourselves on a regular basis. Loved ones, we have been made new through Jesus Christ, we have been adopted into His family, and we are brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ. Shouldn't we accept this honor and act accordingly? Most certainly, we should. Let us honor our Father in all that we think, say, and do. Should we discard God to please men? Should we act like worldly men, so they don't see any evidence of our faith? Should we keep the good news of Jesus Christ to ourselves? These things should never be! Let us seek to please God first and foremost; let us demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ so that those who may not know Him might inquire about our joy, and then we can give them the Word that they, too, might be saved. We are bondservants of Christ Jesus! We are members of God's family! Is this something to be ashamed of? Most certainly not! Let us proclaim the name of Jesus Christ, let us spread the gospel, and when men are not pleased with us, may we count it all joy, for now we are like Jesus. Whom will we please today, man or God? Choose wisely; let them see Jesus!

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

## Day 33: Harbingers of Death

By Pastor Tony Johnson

Three Strand Wesleyan

Read Matthew 24

**Location: The Mount of Olives**-Today we have traveled 165 miles and reached the Mount of Olives

In Matthew chapter 24, where Jesus speaks with his disciples about the end times, verse 28 seems somewhat out of place. "Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather." What does it mean? Jesus is still speaking about what to watch for in the last days. The carcass symbolizes death, and the vultures are the harbingers of death that signify spiritual demise. Scripture declares that death is the result of sin (Rom 6:23) and that it comes through the sinful flesh (Romans 8:5-6). Vultures will always gather in the life of someone who is spiritually dying. What are these vultures, these harbingers of death? Galatians 5:19-21 says, "The acts of the flesh are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity, and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." When you see these things gathering in a person's life, you are seeing the harbingers of death anticipating a spiritual corpse. Do you see any of these vultures in your own life? Through true faith in Christ, you can be freed from the harbingers of death. Romans 8:1-2 "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." Have you earnestly trusted in Jesus for life, or are you doing your personal best to be a "good person" on your own as the vultures circle above your head? Believe in Christ, repent of your sins, and escape from the harbingers of death to eternal life.

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

## Day 34: PRAY... AS IF YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

By Pastor Cody Rader

Vinton Wesleyan

Read Luke 22:39-46

**"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." – Luke 22:42 (NIV).**

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

If you were asked to name the most significant moment in human history, what would you say? Would it be 476 A.D., the fall of Rome? How about July 4, 1776, the signing of the Declaration of Independence? Oh, how about September 2, 1945, the end of World War II? There are many important moments throughout the duration of man's existence. However, I feel there is no one singular event more significant than Jesus' prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane. It was in this moment that the whole of humanity's salvation hung in the balance, past, present, and future. Take a moment and ask yourself, had Jesus not prayed this prayer, how would things be today? If Jesus had not submitted his earthly will to live and not be brutally tortured and murdered for crimes he had not done and instead walked away from it all, where would we be? Reflect for a moment on the words of this great gospel song: "Had it not been for a place called Mount Calvary; had it not been for the old rugged cross; had it not been for a man called Jesus, then forever my soul would be lost" (Had It Not Been, Rusty Goodman). Are you not glad that Jesus that Jesus held out against his human will and submitted to the will of God, knowing he did not for himself but for us? "God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8, ESV). If you are thankful for Jesus, take time to pray something like this in your own life today: **Lord, thank you for Jesus and his example to stand strong above temptation. When you call me, help my desires to be yours. Help me walk so close to Jesus that when it comes time for me to question my own will over yours, I can pray like he did, "Lord, let not my will, but yours be done." I pray this in the name of Jesus, who lives and reigns with you, our Father, and the Holy Spirit, one God, and a world without end. Amen.**

### Day 35 - Failure Did Not Define Peter!

By Pastor Janet Guthrie

Shenandoah District Superintendent

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the Lord's word, "Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. Luke 22:61-62**

The story of Peter denying Jesus, a narrative that appears in all four Gospels, is a testament to the human experience. Temptation, as Peter experienced, is a part of our lives even today. How do we respond when we are tempted by the enemy? The season of Lent is an excellent time for repentance and reflection, a time when we can all relate to Peter's struggle. We've all experienced moments of regret after we speak harshly to a friend, our anger erupts at a family member, or doubt is revealed in our words, and yet again, we feel like a failure as we believe in Christ, but we fall to temptation. There may be an old group of friends you still hang with that do not understand your relationship with Jesus, and you participate in conversations, agreeing with the others in your words, downplaying the truth that you now believe. You leave, beating yourself up for not coming to the defense of Jesus again. No one ever wants to get the big F in life, right? Failure. Peter's life did not end with the posture of "weeping bitterly." No, he is the one the Lord said, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." Matthew 16:18: Your final grade is not an F for failure but an F for forgiveness. As a believer in Christ, you live in a space of freedom from sin and are assured of your forgiveness. You are not defined by your failures but by the transformative power of grace and forgiveness of our Lord. This forgiveness is not just a pardon but a promise of a new beginning, a reason for hope. "Lord, thank you for your forgiveness when we fall short. Your grace is not just sufficient, it's abundant, and your forgiveness is not just for a few, but for each believer. Thank you for the new mercies given each day, a constant reminder of your unfailing love and grace. Amen."

### Day 36: The Triumphant Entry

By Pastor Mason Yopp

Westwood One Wesleyan, Westfield, IN (former student PFWC)

Matthew 21:1-17

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Location: Jerusalem-** Today we have traveled 160 miles and reached Jerusalem.

Jesus' Triumphant Entry into Jerusalem marks the beginning of the final and most important chapter in His earthly ministry. This moment is the culmination of three years of ministry, teaching, healing, performing miracles, and calling all



who hear and witness to repent and turn from their sins. The crowds welcome Him in joyous celebration, spreading their garments on the road as their king rides in on a donkey. They welcome Him with the proclamation, "Hosanna! Hosanna! Praise God for the Son of David!"

We see throughout the Gospels that Jesus often kept His identity secret, only revealing Himself in secrecy to select groups of people. Yet, at this moment, Jesus removes the veil of secrecy, and His identity is now on full display to His people. In this triumphant moment, Jesus' actions are like a living parable, coming to fulfill prophecy and point all people to the Father. Even in His cleansing of the Temple, His actions carry a deeper meaning. Religious leaders had turned a place of worship into a den of thieves and had turned a place to honor and draw near to God into one that intentionally keeps people out.

Even still, though Jesus' identity is on full display, the people eventually turn against Him. The very ones who were proclaiming "Hosanna" become the very ones who shout out, "crucify Him!" Their expectations of Jesus were that He would come as a conquering king to overthrow the Romans, whereas Jesus came as the humble Prince of Peace, who would lay down His own life for the sins of the world.

How quickly is it that people's hearts can turn from our Lord? Often, when life is easy, we can stop and praise Him and thank Him for all He does. But as soon as life gets difficult, we question His goodness, question His plans, and wonder if He has abandoned us. I know in my own life, there have been many times I have gone from praising and worshipping Jesus to questioning Him when things don't make sense or when my expectations of Him don't match what His plans are.

But on this Palm Sunday, may we stop and recognize Jesus' triumphant entry. Jesus' identity, His purpose, and His mission were on full display. Jesus willingly entered Jerusalem, where He knew betrayal, torture, and crucifixion awaited Him. He journeyed to the cross joyfully so that you and I may be freed from our sins and brought into a new life in Him! His journey into Jerusalem is our journey into freedom. May we be like the Jews on Sunday and proclaim "Hosanna" with the way we live our lives!

### **Day 37: Truth and Love in the Face of Failure**

**By Pastor John Rogers**

Number of Steps: _____
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**New Post Wesleyan**

**"Jesus answered, 'It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.' Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him..." – John 13:26-27 NIV.**

"Then Jesus answered, 'Will you really lay down your life for me? Very truly I tell you, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!'" – John 13:38 NIV

As Jesus shared His final meal with the disciples, He spoke truth with deep love. He revealed the betrayal of Judas and the coming denial of Peter, not with condemnation, but with foreknowledge and grace. He knew their weaknesses, yet He still chose to love them.

How often do we, like Peter, declare unwavering devotion, only to falter under pressure? How many times have we, like Judas, chosen something else over Jesus? The truth is that our flesh is weak, but Christ's love remains steadfast. He doesn't turn away from us in our failures; rather, He moves toward us with redemption in His hands.

Judas rejected that grace, but Peter, though broken, was restored. Jesus calls us to face our failures not with despair but with hope. His love is greater than our weakest moments. During this Lenten season, may we humbly receive His truth and embrace His love, knowing that He stands ready to redeem and restore us.

When you falter in your faith, do you respond like Judas, turning away from Jesus, or like Peter, turning back to Him in repentance?

How is God calling you to trust in His redeeming love today?"

The Lord be with you.

## Day 38: 30 Pieces of Silver

By Stephie Clement

Parkway Church on the Mountain

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**“Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you? And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment, he sought an opportunity to betray him.” Matthew 26: 14-16 ESV**

Just 30 pieces of silver...that's it. The same exact cost of replacing the life of a slave in Exodus 21:32. A mere four month's wages at that time. And Judas went to the chief priests and asked if he could gain something for his betrayal. If you are not familiar with the passage, it is easy to assume that Judas was caught between a rock and a hard place, maybe trapped by a Roman soldier, and felt compelled to betray Jesus out of safety or temptation. But that simply was not the case. Judas purposefully crafted a plan to betray Jesus. Can you believe that? I am sure that we would all like to say, “We would NEVER!” Even Judas said he would never. (Matthew 26:35). But Judas's heart is revealed in Matthew 26 verse 25 which says, “Judas, who would betray him, answered, Is it I, Rabbi? He said to him, “You have said so.”

Jesus just told his disciples that one would betray him, and Judas plays along, asking like the rest, “Is it I, Rabbi?”

Rabbi: Teacher, Jewish scholar, or religious leader.

Lord: Master, power, and authority.

Do you see the difference? The rest of Jesus' disciples called him Lord. But not Judas. Judas simply refers to him as Rabbi. Teacher. Someone not divine and not worthy of obedience. Someone to learn from, but not someone worthy of praise. Someone to study their teachings but not someone to submit your life to. Someone wise, but not someone you love. The difference is betrayal. Judas followed Him closely, studied His teachings, and walked with Him day and night, but in the end, he betrayed Him because Jesus was not LORD to Judas. Where are you? In your heart, is Jesus LORD? Is He LORD of your life, not just the author of your morals? Is He master, power, and authority? Or just a scholar whose teachings you study out of obedience. Be sure today that Jesus is LORD of our life. Every detail in submission to His power and authority, for He is worthy! What do you need to submit to Jesus today to give Him full authority as Lord?

## Day 39: Jesus Washed the Disciples Feet

By Pastor Heidi Hovan

New Hope Fellowship

Number of Steps: \_\_\_\_\_

**Read John 13:8-9.**

In his first act, the night He was betrayed, Jesus took the form of the lowliest servant in a household. This servant would welcome weary travelers to the master's house, bow down, and cleanse their feet. As both host and servant, Jesus reminded Peter that the only way to gain access to the Host for fellowship was to allow the Master-servant to wash Peter's feet. Without allowing Jesus access to this menial task required for fellowship with the Host, Peter would lose out on the reason he entered the home.

As we continue our journey toward Easter, in which the Son grants access to the Father through His shed blood on Calvary, we notice that we must also allow God to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is in allowing God to purify us that we can draw near to Him in faith. James 4:8 reminds us of God's promise of intimacy with Him. Notice what is required, though. Draw near to Him. Allow Him to cleanse you with the "washing of the water by His word (Ephesians 5:26)." It is as we draw near, confess our sins, and ask Him to make us righteous that we are able to fellowship fully with Him that is His primary desire.

**Let's pray: "Jesus, thank you for your great love for us in washing the disciples' feet. May we learn from Peter how we need you to do this for us; all you ask is that we offer ourselves to be purified by your shed blood on Calvary. Thank you for the invitation to draw near to you, and we do so today. In Christ's name, amen “**

## Day 40: Good Friday

By Sarah Torres

Baywood Wesleyan

Number of Steps: _____
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**John 1:1-5 -- "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him there was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."**

**Location: The Cross-** Today we have completed our journey and traveled 200 miles to the Cross.

That Friday, the sun rose reluctantly. It could only bear to shine a few brief hours before hiding itself again as its Creator agonized on the cross. All nature was convulsed. Later in the day, the earth itself would tremble, and the rocks split before the knowledge that their LORD had just died, for nature is not sullied with human self-will. It knows its God intimately and obeys Him simply. His children, however...

Oh, the love that brimmed over from the heart of God when He formed his highest Creation in His image! What a happy day it was when He breathed His Spirit into Adam's nostrils. Jesus, the Word, had completed the work of Creation, and it was very good. And now, ages later, on this darkest of Fridays, the Creator looked upon his children. He had felt the same love and joy when He had given the breath of life to each of them: Caiaphas, Pilate, and Judas himself. His love for them was no less now as He was handed over by them to die. He could have withheld the breath from those who cried out, "Crucify!" but He did not. He could have taken the strength from those who ripped his flesh with whips, but He did not. He loved them with his incomparable, everlasting love, for His eternal eyes had seen the day before the thorns existed, before sin and pain and dying, before blood had to be shed. And now, on this Good Friday, He was finishing the work that He began from the foundation of the world to bring His Creation back into line with his original, perfect design.

**How can my life tell his story today and always?**

## Day 41: Silent Saturday

By Pastor Nathan Marone

Emmanuel Wesleyan

**Read Luke 23:54-56**

On Good Friday Jesus sacrificed his life on a cross as atonement for sin. On Easter Sunday he rose from the grave, conquering death itself. But what happened on the Saturday in between these two days? Nothing? Anything?

For his disciples, that Saturday, or Sabbath, as it would have been for them, was a day of mourning, desolation, and confusion. How could it be that the Lord they had followed for three years, absorbing all of his teachings, was now dead? They had risked ridicule. They had given up jobs. They had invested their whole lives in him. They believed that he was the Messiah and that he would save Israel. On Saturday morning, their beliefs were shattered. The investment they had made was gone. All the teachings that they had submitted themselves to, what were they worth? The game was over. They had witnessed a punishing defeat the day before, and they would have to start all over again.

They would make it to Sunday and find out that the story of Jesus Christ was not over yet. It had, in many ways, only just begun. Saturday, however, should serve as a reminder for all of us. God's work is not always apparent or obvious to us. At times, we may sense that we have been abandoned. Where has God gone? Where are the promises he gave to us? When will we see victory?

The Bible gives us some hints of what Jesus was doing on Saturday. Scholars point to select passages that depict Jesus as descending to the lower regions of the earth and preaching to the dead there (Eph 4:7-10, 1 Peter 3:18-22). The Apostles Creed tells us that he descended to the dead. While biblical interpreters will debate what Christ did on that Saturday, we know that he was working. And we know that his work will be completed on Sunday morning!