



**COLLEGE HEIGHTS
BAPTIST CHURCH**

The Christian Life: Part III

Daily Scripture Readings for
March 1 - April 4

WEEK 9: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND ANGER

Monday, March 1 - James 1:19-21

The trio of phrases in James 1:19 are a great description of how to live life. The first two phrases will lead to the third. If you are quick to listen and slow to speak, it will lead to being slow to anger. To bring glory to God in our Christian life we must get rid of anger. Living as God requires means having a spirit which shows God's righteousness which is not human anger. This is different from the Lord's anger, a righteous anger; we will have time to discuss that anger later in the week.

The anger in our passage today and tomorrow is getting mad at someone and lashing out. To combat this anger, we must be quick to listen and slow to speak. Most of the time, someone did not intentionally upset you; usually, people are not out to get you riled up. It is so incredibly important to hear why something is happening before assuming the answer. Often, there is a simple misunderstanding or a simple disagreement which does not need to end in anger or hurt feelings. Let us listen before we lash out.

Let us imitate God who says of himself that God is slow to anger. As a reminder, the image of God being slow to anger is a long stick match which has ample opportunity to burn out before it burns you. Or more fanciful, it is the image of a long nosed dragon which can stifle its fire before it escapes and destroys everything in its path.

Do you have a problem with anger? James 1:21 equates anger with sordidness and wickedness. Instead, we are to embrace the meekness of Christ who had all the power in the world and yet allowed himself to be arrested and crucified. Instead of being angry, be meek. Pray for God to work in your life this week if you deal with anger. "Welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls."

Tuesday, March 2 - Matthew 5:21-24

Yesterday's passage spoke more about a general continual attitude of anger. In Matthew 5:21-22, it seems Jesus is critiquing the moments of sin when we lash out in anger. In these verses, Jesus is enhancing the command to not murder by saying, you should not even be angry with a brother or sister. The equation is fairly straightforward: in the eyes of Jesus, you break the commandment of "do not murder" if you harbor anger toward another person. This is how serious our feelings of anger toward people are.

To solve this problem of sin, we must repair the relationship with our brothers and sisters we have wronged. We must seek reconciliation. I heard it said a few weeks ago when describing reconciliation that "forgiveness is one-sided; reconciliation is two-sided." When we are wronged or when someone lashes out in anger toward us, scripture is clear that we are to forgive that person (see Matthew 6:12). When we seek reconciliation, the one who has been forceful and angry becomes vulnerable. We seek forgiveness from the offended and the offended has all of the power at that point. This is the humility we are supposed to exhibit when we recognize the sin in our lives.

When we have angered someone, let us seek reconciliation. Let us not force them to forgive; that is between them and God. However, we must ask for forgiveness and get rid of the anger which is in our hearts. God requires it.

Wednesday, March 3 - Romans 9:30-10:21

Tonight, we continue to work through the Third Section of Romans which deals with the problem of Israel's status with God. In our passage tonight, Paul will argue that Israel knowingly rejected the Messiah, which means it rejected the gospel, and thus is responsible for their current alienation. In this section, Paul uses several Old Testament passages to show that the gospel message of Jesus is founded upon the

Old Testament. In other words, the Old Testament points to Jesus and salvation through Him.

Romans makes the claim that the Jews have heard the message and chosen to reject it. Romans 10:9-13 is one of the clearest descriptions of professing faith in Jesus in all of Scripture. Romans 10:14-17 follows that up by explaining that this message needs to be taken to the ears of the unbelievers. Who can you bring the good news of Jesus to today? How is the world to know Christ if they are not told?

Thursday, March 4 - Numbers 25:1-3

The anger we spoke of earlier this week is different than the anger we discuss today. When it comes to the Christian life, anger toward another person is sin. However, righteous anger similar to the Lord's anger toward sin is necessary.

God was angry at the sin of idolatry the Israelites were committing. This anger is permissible in the eyes of God. I hope that sin makes you angry. Any person who has been made righteous in the eyes of God by the power of the Holy Spirit and actions of Christ on the cross should be upset at the rampant sin in the world. We should be angry and feel guilt about the sin in our own life.

The Christian Life is antithetical to sin. As Romans 6:11 states "you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." Jesus gets angry at sin when he clears the Temple of the money changers; God gets angry many times in the Old Testament. The appropriateness of anger is conditioned on what you are angry about. If you are angry about sin (yours and the sin in the world), then you are righteous in the eyes of God. If you are angry at a person, then you are in the wrong. If your anger is at a person, you are committing sin and you need to confess to God.

Friday, March 5 - Mark 3:1-6

Anger and sorrow rolled into one. Have you ever felt the way Jesus felt in Mark 3:5? Jesus is angry at the religious leaders because their silence showed they cared

more about the ritual of keeping the Sabbath than the health of the man with the withered hand. At the same time, Jesus feels a great sorrow that the leaders' lives have led to this moment where they do not desire God to bestow goodness on men. To bestow goodness on this man would be doing work on the Sabbath; the religious leaders did not want that to happen. Jesus had anger and sorrow for these men.

A deep sorrow should come alongside a righteous anger about the plight of the world. When we see a person who has made grave mistakes succumb to those mistakes, we must feel brokenness for the hurt that has occurred and feel anger at the same time. Sorrow and anger.

It is rare for Jesus to be said to have anger. Mark 1:41 is the only other occurrence where it is explicitly said he was angry though there are other stories where anger seems to be the main emotion (Jesus cleansing the Temple comes to mind). Jesus does not get angry at the people who are "sinners;" instead, he gets angry at the people who do not think they are sinners. The feeling of anger comes out when he sees people manipulating the worship of God, and yet it is still mixed with sorrow and compassion, thanks be to God.

Let us be imitators of Christ in this regard (and all other regards as well). When we have anger about the way the world is turning, let's express sorrow, grief, and compassion upon those who are being hurt. Let's lament for the people who have a hardness of heart and cannot see the better way of the Kingdom of God. Will you join me in prayer today for this world? Let our anger be mixed with sorrow and let our prayers turn to action.

Saturday, March 6 - Ephesians 4:25-32

"Do not let the sun go down on your anger." Sometimes taken very literally, this is a good word of advice for all of us. The longer you stay angry, the harder it is to give up your anger. The longer you are angry, the higher chance you lash out in anger causing you to sin.

Using the context, it seems this type of anger is different from the anger spoken against in James and Matthew (see earlier in the week). Using verse 25 as a guide, it seems that anger is more conflict about speaking the truth to one another. Instead of covering up the truth and not dealing with the issues at hand, we must speak the truth no matter the conflict which comes. Conflict is not bad; the absence of conflict is actually worse than conflict. Absence of conflict generally means that people have stopped caring. Conflict means that people have opinions and care about the issues.

Conflict can get heated, so don't let your conflict cause you to be angry and sin. Let us disagree, but let us also love one another and build each other up for the glory of God. Let us forgive one another as God has forgiven us.

Sunday, March 7 - Psalm 85

WEEK 10: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND JEALOUSY/ENVY/COVETING

Monday, March 8 - Exodus 20:17

The Ten Commandments are broken into two sections. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God, and the last six commandments deal with our relationship with people. It's why "love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your mind, all your soul, and all your strength...and love your neighbor as yourself" really is a summation of the entire Law.

This week is all about the Tenth Commandment: Do not covet, do not lust after, do not be jealous, do not envy. This is the only command which is not about what you do but about your desires. To just yearn for and want what your neighbor has is sin. Coveting can ruin your life. It can be a gateway to other sin (we will see this play out in the James passage on Thursday). Coveting is selfishness; God calls us to be selfless. If we are to bring glory to God through our actions, we must denounce the lifestyle of "keeping up with the Joneses" and always wanting more. If you desire what you don't have, it is coveting; it is lust; it is sin.

NOTE: I will be on vacation this coming Sunday; Michael will be preaching on the subject of Coveting. These readings may not exactly correspond with his sermon, but I pray they still bless you.

Tuesday, March 9 - Exodus 20:3-6

If this week's focus is about the tenth commandment why are we reading the first and second commandment today? Two reasons: 1. The sin of jealousy is different than God's jealousy in verse 5. God's jealousy is not the main focus for this week. 2. Idolatry and covetous are related.

If you covet, you have not put your trust in God's provisions. If you want more than what God has given you, then you think you know better than God. Simply put, living a life with a covetous attitude means you have put yourself ahead of God and created an idol of yourself.

Why do we think we know better than God? Why do we covet and make idols for ourselves? We've never grown into mature followers of God. Think about when you were a teenager. Did you think you knew more about life than your parents? As you grew into adulthood, you realized that your parents knew more than you gave them credit for and you began to regularly seek their advice.

It turns out we are the same with God except many of us have not grown out of our spiritual teenage years. We think we know more about life than the Creator of life itself. We know more about what we need than the one who put the stars and planets in place. When will we grow up and realize God knows what He is doing and will take care of us? When will we trust in his provisions and not succumb to idolatry and covetousness?

Wednesday, March 10 - Romans 11:1-36

We conclude the Third Section of Romans tonight with the conclusions on what Israel's rejection of Jesus means for their preferred status as God's chosen. Romans 9-11 teaches us that while the old covenant was replaced by the new covenant in Christ, God has not forsaken the Jews nor has he backed away from his covenant with Abraham. The coming of Jesus is not about excluded Jews but rather including all people into the family of God. How does this happen? We can discuss more tonight, but do not think we will answer all of the questions to your satisfaction.

At the conclusion of Romans 11, it's almost as if Paul finally throws his hands up and says "I don't know how God is going to do all of this, but I believe He will!" It's as if in verse 33, Paul says "ok, God. You're smarter than I can understand, I'll leave this to you!" We may not be able to figure out all of the answers, but we serve a God who is sovereign and does have everything figured out. Thanks be to God. To him be the glory forever. AMEN!

Thursday, March 11 - James 4:1-10

James 4 begins with explaining James 3:16. The conflict we see in the world today starts with envy of what others have and coveting your neighbor's goods. The passage moves from this statement to explain that a thought-process like this is friendship with the world and that means separation from God. God is a jealous God who demands our souls/spirit.

Does this passage not convict you? It does me. I certainly don't go to the extreme like verse 2 and murder, but I do see coveting as the foundation of most of the conflict I have in my life. I want or yearn for a product I see an ad for or I desire a vacation I see someone else is on and it causes angst in my life and puts me in a bad attitude. Oh, how weak I am for letting stuff ruin my day! What do we do to combat this?

James 4:7 has the answer: submit yourselves to God. When we submit ourselves to God, or as verse 10 says, humble yourself before the Lord, we allow the will of God to flood our souls and that will take all jealousy, envy, and covetous away from our spirit. This is why we don't receive what we pray for! We pray for the wrong things in the wrong spirit.

If we humble ourselves before the Lord, He will lift us high. He will take care of our needs. We do not need to covet and lust after what others have or what others are doing; instead, draw near to God, and He will draw near to you and take care of all your needs.

Friday, March 12 - Galatians 5:19-26

We read these verses today to show the seriousness of envy and jealousy. What's the harm, you may ask, of drooling over the neighbor's new car or pool? Who gets hurt if I lust after the vacation my brother's family got to take? Well, everyone gets hurt. It hurts your relationship with God because you are committing sin. It hurts your relationship with your neighbors and family because you are no longer happy for them, but you are selfishly sad for yourself. It hurts you because you waste time concerned about what you don't have instead of being grateful for what you do have.

You may still not be convinced about the problem of covetous. Are you convinced of the problem with the other vices in this list? Paul writes about all of these sins similarly; he makes no distinction between greater and lesser sin. In fact, he says that those who live their lives in this way are not citizens of the Kingdom of God! Instead, citizens of the Kingdom of God are to live according to the fruit of the Spirit. If we call God our Lord, then let's act like it as well. Let us not live by the fleshly desires but by the Spirit. Pray today for a spirit of love instead of a spirit of envy. Pray for a spirit of joy instead of jealousy.

Saturday, March 13 - 2 Samuel 12:1-14

As I mentioned on Monday, coveting is a gateway to other sin. There is no better example in Scripture than the story of David and Bathsheba. David coveting Uriah's wife is where this sordid tale began. What follows is adultery, lying, and murder. The lives of so many people are ruined because of David's decision to lust after Bathsheba. A child dies because of this sin. A family ends up in complete disarray because of this episode (read 2 Sam. 12:11, then 2 Sam 13-18 if you have time today).

Lives are ruined because of sin and coveting is no different. Yes, it is the only commandment of the ten which is internal rather than external but that doesn't make coveting any less sinful. It is not a sin that is "out in the open" but that doesn't mean it is not a sin. Sin leads to other sin. Sin has consequences, even if the sin is not public.

Sunday, March 14 - Psalm 86

WEEK 11: THE CHRISTIAN LIFE AND PRIDE

Monday, March 15 - Proverbs 16:18-20

The taller they stand; the harder they fall. The bigger their head; the louder it pops. The more pride a person has, the more destructive the fall. For our last topic concerning the Christian Life, we will discuss the sin of pride. Proverbs 16:19 clearly says what our priorities should be: it is better to be humble and poor than prideful and rich.

As with many of the topics we have covered throughout this series, the main issue with pride is that it is idolatry. It is putting yourself before God. Pride and worship of yourself will lead to destruction, but humility and worship of God will lead to eternal life. Proverbs 16:20 explains how a Christian is supposed to live their life: instead of pride and idol worship, let us work hard no matter who sees us and trust in the Lord. This work will lead to a happy life.

Do you have pride in your work? Or are you trusting in the work of God? Do you think that you can push through or do you rely on God to take you through? Don't live a life of pride. Instead, humble yourself and trust in the Lord. It will lead to a much happier life.

Tuesday, March 16 - 2 Kings 5:1-14

Often, the first step to healing and redemption is humility. Before this step, pride gets in the way of healing. One of the most important phrases to learn is "I'm sorry." Without it, no relationship can be mended. No family can be healed. Without admission of sin, no soul can be saved.

Naaman is almost not healed because he has too much pride. He was ready to pay for services rendered to the king, but when Elisha doesn't give him the honor of meeting with him, Naaman is ready to turn around and go home. When the remedy for the skin condition is bathing in a river, Naaman thinks this is some kind of joke. He is prideful in his country and cannot imagine how the dirty Jordan river can help him. It is only the work of his servants, who have no status to be prideful in, who convince Naaman to do as Elisha said.

Are there relationships in your life which need mending? Are there people you need to say "I'm sorry" to? Don't let pride get in the way of the magnificent healing which can take place because of the glory of God. Maybe you think apologizing is not going to change anything. Naaman didn't think bathing in the Jordan would change his life either. Nothing is impossible with God. Take the first step in reconciliation. Leave your pride behind and take upon the cloak of humility and let God work in your life.

Wednesday, March 17 - Romans 12:1-21

Today's reading begins the fourth and final section of the body of the Letter to the Romans. Romans 12:1-15:13 discusses Christian conduct which follows from the theology of the first eleven chapters of the letter. Romans 12:1-2 is the thematic

statement for these four chapters and you likely know them quite well. It almost seems as if Romans 12 becomes a “best of” compilation of Paul’s encouragements to other churches. The renewing of the mind, spiritual gifts, and love for one another are all part of Romans 12. There is lots of great material to cover tonight, so I pray you will join us in study.

Romans 12:1-15:13 is the power of the gospel being lived out in the lives of God’s people. Is the gospel something you keep to yourself and only live out at home? Or is it something that permeates your life? Think through how you live out the Christian life and bring glory to God in this way. How are you living in this world because of what God has already done for you?

Thursday, March 18 - Philippians 2:1-8

If you want to live your life by one saying, you could not do much better than “do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility, regard others as better than yourselves.” The opposite of doing that is pride. Too often, we think that not being prideful is the goal. We focus on the absence of pride as opposed to the addition of humility. There is not a neutral position when it comes to pride and humility. You are either one or the other. Maybe there is a spectrum of sorts, but either you are exhibiting pride in your life or humility. You are either looking after your interests or the interests of others.

There is no better example for us in this regard than Christ. Having every reason to have pride in who he is, Jesus took the form of a poor baby and lived a life of service toward others ultimately sacrificing his life for the sake of the world. Do you live your life in service to others or do you live life in service to yourself?

How can we get rid of the sin of pride? I think verse 1 gives us a clue when it says “sharing in the Spirit.” The same mind that was in Christ can guide us as well. The Holy Spirit is real, alive, and living inside of you. Let the Spirit govern your actions.

Humble yourself and let God take over. This is the only way to not have pride. Give yourself over to God.

Friday, March 19 - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Love and pride cannot coexist. While most of the time, you hear 1 Cor. 13 read at weddings, it is a message directed at the church. There cannot be prideful attitudes within the body of Christ. There is only room for love. This section of 1 Corinthians is directed toward those who think they are better than other Christians because of their spiritual gifts. Why do we do this to each other? Why do we think we are better than others?

As I write this, it is Feb. 15 and I'm stuck inside because of several inches of snow and wind chills below zero. Too often, I have the temptation of pride. Prideful in my education, my vocation, my intellect, etc. I am tempted to think of myself better than others and way too often, I give in to that temptation and have pride in my life. And yet on a day with snow on the ground and frozen pipes, I am helpless. I don't have the slightest clue what to do. But my neighbor who has different skills than I do, who didn't go to college, knows exactly how to help. We all have different skills and when we are prideful in our own, the whole community suffers.

We all have different gifts in the body of Christ; they all serve one common purpose: to glorify God. Let us share love with one another and work together to build one another up. Let us not be prideful. We need each other to serve faithfully in the Kingdom of God.

Saturday, March 20 - Luke 10:17-20

What are we to take pride in? It is certainly not ourselves and it is not even the work we do for the Kingdom of God. Instead, we rejoice in the work of Christ. We take pride that He has chosen us. We bask in the glory of the Son. Do not take pride in the

work that you have done, but take pride in the work which God has done through you. Let us keep this perspective.

When we have this mindset, we allow the Spirit to use us to defeat Satan. Satan gets a taste of what will be his ultimate punishment. As we close this sermon series tomorrow, let us remember the point of the Christian Life: we are to bring glory to God through our minds, service, evangelism, and piety. This is living as God requires. Pride prevents us from living as God requires. It changes our mindset from being focused on God to being focused on ourselves. Let us not take pride in the work we are doing; let us instead take pride that God has written our names in the Book of Life.

Sunday, March 21 - Psalm 87

THE ROAD TO JERUSALEM

Monday, March 22 - Mark 8:27-33

A journey begins with one step. Over the next two weeks, we will be journeying to the cross and an empty tomb. The journey starts not when Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday but when Jesus is as far away from Jerusalem while still being in Israel. It's in Caesarea Philippi where Peter proclaims Jesus to be the Messiah. In the Gospel of Mark, this is a turning point when Jesus begins to tell his disciples that he must be killed. It is also at this point when Jesus and the disciples turn toward Jerusalem and journey south.

In our relationship with God, a journey with Jesus begins with acknowledging who He is. Theologian N.T. Wright says in his book *Jesus and the Victory of God* that a relationship with Jesus has four steps: invitation, welcome, challenge, and summons. The first step of a relationship with God is accepting the invitation God gives. The first step is to answer the call of Jesus like Peter did and correctly name Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ. All journeys start with one step. The first step with God is acknowledging who Jesus is.

Who do you know who needs to take this first step today? Make time to talk to them this week. Pray for that person and pray for the Holy Spirit to be working in that person's life.

Tuesday, March 23 - Mark 9:2-13

As we discussed yesterday, we are using N.T. Wright's illustration of a relationship with Jesus being a four step process. The first step is accepting Jesus' invitation. The next step is Jesus welcoming you with open arms. That's what you see in the transfiguration. I have heard a pastor call moments like these thin spaces. These are the moments when heaven and earth touch and create a beautiful picture of who God really is. One cannot help but notice that the Transfiguration occurs only after Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah. For people to experience God in this special way, one must have recognized who Jesus is. It is then that God welcomes us with open arms and shows His true self.

We don't have to clean ourselves up before coming to Jesus. We don't have to think we will never sin after coming to Jesus. At the end of our passage yesterday, Peter is rebuked by Jesus. Peter didn't have everything figured out, but he had enough figured out. When we accept the invitation, the second step of the journey is God welcoming us and walking alongside us. It is God taking care of us while we are on the journey.

I pray that you know how much you are loved by God. I hope you know how much God welcomes you just as you are. Of course, there is challenge of sin (Step 3) and summon to join God in his work (Step 4), but none of that is a prerequisite to God accepting you into the family. We have access to the majesty and glory and awesome power of God as soon as we accept the invitation to be a child of God. Jesus welcomes all people into the family.

Wednesday, March 24 - Romans 13:1-14

How should the Christian live in relationship with the government? Romans 13:1 gets to the point of how the Christian should live. Be subject to the authorities. How should one live this command out in society today? What about Christians in other countries who have less freedoms than Christians in the United States? What about when Christians do what is good and are punished (see Romans 12:3)? We can cover all of these questions tonight. We will also look at the rest of the chapter discussing love for one another and the urgency to follow Christ. Could these two topics answer our questions about authority? Let's work this out together. See you tonight.

Thursday, March 25 - Luke 18:31-34

The journey to Jerusalem was continuing. Much like Jesus warned the disciples what was to happen in Monday's scripture, he warns them again but this time with less rebuke from the disciples. Here it says they did not understand what Jesus was saying. I believe that God sometimes hides what is happening for our own good. If the disciples understood what Jesus was saying, I think it would have caused more anguish than it would have helped. Later, in Luke 24:45, after the resurrection, Jesus "opened their minds to understand the scriptures."

God will open our minds and hearts at the right time. If you have been journeying with us on Experiencing God this year, this might be where the Blackabys and I diverge most greatly. Experiencing God makes it seem so easy to see what God is up to. Just open your eyes! But passage after passage in the Bible talks about God hiding the truth from his followers. I believe that God does this for our benefit.

Here's what I think: God is at work around us. There will be times when God reveals to us what He is doing so we can join Him and other times He is working without revealing it to his people until the right time. Other times, God shows us what He is up to, but makes it clear that is not where we are supposed to be serving. Part of

the journey with God is trusting Him to lead you. You don't need to know everything. Just enough to follow God.

Friday, March 26 - John 11:45-57

These verses today summarize the beginning of the end of the Road to Jerusalem. After the raising of Lazarus, the Jewish officials were ready to arrest Jesus. He was a wanted man. The reason that those leaders wanted to arrest Jesus was politics. They determined that if enough people started to follow Jesus, then they would lose their power of Israel. Once turmoil started in Israel, Rome would come in with force and completely destroy the Temple and the Jewish way of life. Caiaphas explains in verse 50 that it's better for one man to die than for the nation to perish. Ironically, Caiaphas was exactly right. And this is what Jesus set out to do. He would die for the sake of the entire nation, nay, the entire world.

The timing was not yet right to die, so Jesus "hid out" for some time. He remained secluded in the wilderness. The wilderness is a time of preparation. Israel was in the wilderness until it was ready for the Promised Land. John the Baptist prepared the people out in the wilderness for the coming Messiah. Jesus prepared for the beginning of ministry in the wilderness for 40 days. Now to prepare for the final stage of his mission on earth, Jesus goes near the wilderness with his disciples to prepare.

Whenever you have a big decision in your life, a time of preparation is necessary. "Going into the wilderness" and spending time in solitude and prayer is a necessary way to get your heart right with God before moving to where God ultimately wants you to be. We approach the weekend of Palm Sunday, the start of Holy Week. Take today to be in the wilderness. Take time to prepare your heart and mind for the most important week in the Christian calendar. Prepare your soul for what God wants to show you in this coming week. Take time to be in solitude with God and prepare your life for what God has in store.

Saturday, March 27 - John 12:1-11

Let's recap our road to Jerusalem: there was acknowledgment of the Messiah, there was glorious welcoming to see the fullness of Christ, there was foretelling of what was to transpire, then personal preparation. Today concludes the prepwork for the Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem: Mary anoints Jesus. Mary prepares Jesus for "the end."

It seems that Mary understood what was about to transpire better than any of the disciples. Did God allow her to understand the teachings of Jesus better than the disciples? Possibly. Was she more ready to see Jesus as a different type of Messiah than the Jewish society was expecting? Maybe. Whatever the case, Mary decided to give her most expensive position in service to Jesus.

Using the four steps of a relationship with God as seen earlier in the week, this is being summoned to join the work of God. Mary was used in a special way because she was willing to follow Jesus whatever the cost. You've accepted the invite, you've been welcomed to see the glory of God, you may have been challenged and changed your lifestyle, but have you accepted the summons to join God in his work? The disciples hadn't done so yet; they still didn't understand what was happening. Mary, however, knew her place was to be at the feet of God learning (see Luke 10:38-42) and serving Him. Have you accepted the summons to join God in his work? Are you ready to journey with Jesus to Jerusalem in order to take up your cross?

HOLY WEEK

Sunday, March 28 - John 12:12-19

The stage has been set and now the journey to Jerusalem has been completed. The task has not been finished, but the entry is at hand. Back in John 11:55-57, the people wondered if Jesus would even come to Jerusalem given the call for his arrest. Not only did he come, but he rode in on a donkey in a parade as a king triumphantly returning to his home. The people welcomed him home, shouting "Hosanna! Save us!" This is something he planned to do.

One interesting part of the Triumphal Entry not expressed in John is in Luke 19:40. The leaders grumble about the crowds worshipping Jesus. Jesus says that if they didn't shout for him, the stones would! That's the power of God; the universe knows the creator and it even can cry out for Him! What an awesome God!! Please come and celebrate Palm Sunday with us this morning!

Monday, March 29 - Luke 19:41-44

Jesus wept for what was about to happen in Jerusalem. He did not cry for his own grief but the lostness of the Jewish people. The plan from the beginning was for Israel to be the conduit of salvation to the entire world, meaning, Israel would show the world God and lead to the salvation of Jews and Gentiles alike. The dawn of a new era was appearing and Jesus has come to fulfill what the Old Testament had foretold. He had come to save Israel and save the world. Yet, a sad reality occurred; Israel rejected their Messiah. Calamity would come upon Jerusalem for their disbelief in Christ; the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was the fulfillment of this prophecy. Jesus came to bring peace, but there would be no peace in Jerusalem because the Jews (as a community) rejected the Son of God. For this, Jesus wept.

Jesus has made available a relationship with God to all people, but He will not force his way into a person's life. The invitation is available for all people, but we have the choice to accept or reject. We praise God for the people who have made that decision and we weep for those who have rejected Jesus. Destruction is coming for those who do not recognize the time of visitation from God. The Savior is waiting to enter your heart; why don't you let Him come in?

Tuesday, March 30 - Mark 11:12-25

As Mark tells the story of Jesus in his gospel, he uses a literary technique called “bracketing.” It is where he starts one story, interjects a similar but different story, then finishes the first story. In seminary, we called them Markan sandwiches. Our passage today is one example of bracketing. On this day when Jesus cleanses the Temple, he also curses a fig tree for not having figs during not-fig season. Was Jesus just cranky or hangry (hungry + angry) on this day? Maybe but unlikely. I think that Jesus was perfectly in control of his feelings and emotions at all times. He was more likely frustrated about the lack of understanding the Temple had concerning who He was. He was angry that the Temple was more like a bazaar than a holy place of God. Cursing the fig tree and it withering is a metaphor for what is happening to the Temple; Jesus is cleaning house. The Temple was not producing fruit. It’s as John 15:6 says: “whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.” The Temple as the ultimate symbol of the Jewish faith was not producing appropriate relationships with God and did not recognize that Jesus was the Messiah. Jesus condemns the Temple for this just as he curses the fig tree.

I worry about what Jesus would do if he visited churches today. How would he react to the works and ministries of the church? Are we pointing people toward a relationship with God, or are we more focused on “church business?” Are we focused on the Kingdom of God or on our budget deficit? Would Jesus cleanse the church or would he commend the work we are doing? I’m scared to know the answer.

Wednesday, March 31 - John 12:44-47

No services tonight as we will meet tomorrow to take the Lord’s Supper together. So we take a break from Romans this Wednesday and continue looking at the week leading to Easter. We read a summary of Jesus’ teachings today. Jesus’ ministry was to point to the Father. He was not on earth for his own glory but for the glory of the one who sent him.

We are not Jesus, but what will be said of your life in this regard? Did you seek glory for yourself or glory for your Father in heaven? The Christian band Casting Crowns wrote a song in 2018 called "Only Jesus." Here is part of the course:

"And I, I don't want to leave a legacy
I don't care if they remember me
Only Jesus."

The message of these lyrics is very clear and a great example of our goal on earth. Let us not worry about what others think about us when we have died and gone to heaven; instead, let us be concerned with what others think about our Savior because of the life we've lived. Let us live life so that others see Jesus in us; let us live life to bring light into a dark world.

Thursday, April 1 - Matthew 26:17-75

We gather tonight as the disciples and Jesus gathered on that Thursday night before Jesus was arrested. We take time to read the story of Jesus' arrest and death this year from Matthew. Over the next two days, the readings are long, so the devotions won't be.

I am always amazed when I read this story at how much Christ loved us. At any point in the proceedings, he could have stopped all of it and yet for our benefit, he endured it all. Love so amazing, so divine. Have you taken time to thank God for his indescribable gift today?

Friday, April 2 - Matthew 27:1-61

The events of Jesus' arrest and death show that he was the Son of God. He heals the man's ear in Luke 22:51. In Matt. 27:51-54, an earthquake tears the veil in the Temple in two and people were raised from the dead. It is clear that God's Son has changed the world because of His death! God is available to all and death is not final any longer. Praise be to God for the sacrifice Jesus made!

Saturday, April 3 - Matthew 27:62-66

The Pharisees and Jewish leaders have seen what happened when Jesus was crucified on Friday. They are determined to not let their power be taken away, so they guard the tomb prepared to battle this "imposter" as they say in Matt. 27:63.

It's funny how we think we can challenge the will of God and stop his work. God's plan will happen, so instead of fighting it, let's embrace His will and live under His commands. Is that how you are living your life on this Holy Saturday?

Sunday, April 4 - Matthew 28:1-10

Happy Easter Sunday! HE IS RISEN!!! I pray you plan to worship with us this morning. We didn't get to worship in-person last Easter, so let's make it a point to join with God's family today!