

## **The Sayings of Jesus**

As we approach Lent, the time for remembering the passion and death of our Lord, we invite you to meditate with us using the sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels.

## **Ash Wednesday – Luke 14:15-24**

### **A certain man was preparing a great banquet**

My heavenly father, please help me, be with me; be with me to complete this short writing about you. Thank you for enabling me to read and learn from these Bible verses (Luke 14:15-24).

We are sinners – all of us, human beings. We are sinners because we did not, we do not obey you – through Adam and Eve. We all are created by you. You have provided for all of our needs in spite of our sins. You have sent your only son, Jesus Christ, to die for our sins. How great you are. All though we are sinners, you have prepared dinner and invited all of us to come to eat in your own home. Your parable of the rich landowner, farmer, newly-wed young man, has taught us a lot. You say they will not taste of the dinner. We understand the dinner is the life in heaven. They can not enter the heaven because they refuse it, because of being busy to take care of their property on earth, because not giving fully first priority to God's invitation, because not knowing that it is very important to accept the gift the LOVE of God.

We all need to take seriously the teaching of this parable, from the Bible. We ought to first seek the kingdom of God. We have to pray GOD to help us to have wisdom to give first priority to the work of God. We have to fully rely on God for everything we need and do. Let's all respond to God's invitation to participate to his plan to fully fill his house. Let us GLORIFY his LOVE.

**Tu Le**

**Thursday (day2) – Luke 14:25-33**

**Anyone who does not carry his cross**

(the cost of discipleship)

Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

**Wayne Hansen**

## **Friday (day3) – Luke 14:34-35**

### **Salt**

Salt is good: but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” Luke 14:34

I recently reviewed poems written by my dad and was curious as to whom he was calling “salt of the earth” and why. One use was in a tribute to the Rural Youth. When my dad’s 4-H group outgrew their 4-H status they decided to meet the next year for a “rural youth” picnic. They kept meeting every year. I realize that these people were part of what made my dad’s life flavorful. They gave it solidness and presented a reason for him to keep on living. Toward the end of his life, I believe my dad was weary of burying friends. When they are congregated it is a challenge, but when too many have been part of you, one is filled to saturation from the quiet ocean of grief and it is difficult to keep the spice of life. It is unique characters who spur new life. It is the gentle greeting, the tender reminders that carry us.

We are called to grow past what we learned in childhood, past duty, and take a risk to be fully human (to be completely us), “if salt has lost its flavor how shall it be seasoned?” It’s you. It’s me. It’s God. It’s the relationship. It’s the salt of the earth.

**Faith Johnson**

**Saturday (day4) – Luke 15:3-7**

**Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep**

“Just so, I tell you there is more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.” (Luke 15:7)

This is the first of three parables directed against the Pharisees. It shows the love of our Savior for the outcast, the despised and criminal classes. The Pharisees professed to be shepherds but neglected those that most needed their help. The owner of the flock is our Lord Himself, the Good Shepherd. The flock is the Church. The ninety and nine are those who seem to be righteous. The one sheep that is lost and is found is all truly penitent sinners. When we repent it is a turning around. We turn away and around from sin. The sinners are represented as one sheep to show Christ's love for each individual soul. The seeking and laying the lost sheep upon his shoulders are Christ's work of love and after repentance bringing him back to a state of grace. At this time the friends and neighbors (which are the angels) rejoiced with the shepherd.

During this Lenten season we pray that we will reflect on Jesus and the price He paid for our salvation. Help us to repent, to turn away from sin, to seek forgiveness and accept the love of Christ in our hearts. Amen.

**Doris Hanson**

## **Monday (day5) – Luke 15:8-10**

### **Suppose a woman has ten silver coins**

“Just so, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.” (Luke 15:10)

Some consider the 15<sup>th</sup> chapter of Luke as one of the most popular chapters of the New Testament. If we read the verses before and after the selected verses, we see that there are three stories, each with a joyful ending.

Jesus put great emphasis on these special stories called parables. These parables were usually brief, vivid, and quite entertaining. But they were more. In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus’ disciples asked Him why he spoke in parables. In answering Jesus linked the understanding of His parables to knowing the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven. In Matthew 13, Jesus began many of his parables, “The Kingdom of Heaven is like...”. He also spoke in parables “because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand”. (Matthew 13:10-13)

History tells us that Palestinian women received ten silver coins as a Wedding gift. Besides their monetary value, these coins held a sentimental value like that of a wedding ring. To lose one would be extremely distressing. Just as a woman would rejoice at finding her lost coin or ring, so the angels rejoice over a repentant sinner. Each individual is precious to God. He grieves over every loss, and rejoices whenever one of His children is found and brought into his kingdom. Perhaps we would have more joy in our churches if we shared Jesus’ love and concern for the lost.

Prayer: Dear Jesus, help me to share your love to others around me. Amen.

**Coral Anderson**

## **Tuesday (day6) – Luke 15:11-32**

### **There was a man who had two sons**

Although it can be very helpful to see in ourselves each of the three main characters in this story, it is really told to us as elder brothers. At the start of chapter 15 it is clear that the three parables in this chapter are directed at the religious people who objected to Jesus' friends. If we as church members are mostly much more like the elder brother than the younger, then the parable tells us of a God who loves all people, even us pious ones who may think that God is not very wise in giving away gifts to those who do not deserve it. Note that the elder brother is very much like Jonah, who did not want the Ninevites forgiven. In both stories, God is making an appeal to the righteous, unforgiving one, an appeal to change their attitudes, to change their hearts.

And so God also comes out of the festive house to invite us to leave behind our bitterness, our self-pity, our passive-aggressive habits, our longing refusal of pleasure, our rejection of our siblings. If we are willing to let go of these things we can join God's party and banquet, where everyone is welcome by grace.

**Bradley Holt**

## **Wednesday (day7) – Luke 16:19-31**

### **At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus**

“There was a rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, full of sores, “ (Luke 16:19-20)

Jesus tells about the rich man and the beggar.

Selfish, devoted to and caring only for oneself; concerned primarily with one's own interests, benefits or welfare, etc., regardless of others, the Pharisees considered wealth to be proof of righteousness.

In this story, Jesus tells the Pharisees about a rich man who was selfish and would not use his riches to help Lazarus, a poor man who has nothing. When Lazarus died he went to be with Abraham in Heaven and when the rich man died, he was taken to Hades, not because of his great wealth, but because he was selfish with it.

The rich man wanted Abraham to raise Lazarus from the dead to warn his five brothers to be unselfish with their riches. Abraham would not do so because he felt that the rich man's brothers wouldn't believe the message that Moses and the Prophets were trying to spread on earth, therefore they wouldn't believe a resurrected person either.

What are our attitudes toward our money and possessions? Are we selfish, or do we use them to help others? How many of us have possessions we do not use anymore? If so, we could donate them to help others less fortunate than us? Do we donate food to help people that are in need?

Jesus doesn't expect us to be perfect. However he expects us to make an effort to be unselfish with our money and possessions, and also our time and talents. He accepts our shortcomings but wants us to strive to do more to help others.

**Jean Evers**



## **Thursday (day8) – Luke 17:11-19**

### **Were not all ten cleansed?**

These verses from the Gospel of Luke recount for us the story of Jesus healing ten lepers and the return of only one to thank him. Then, as we look closer, we see that nine of the ten were Jews and one was a Samaritan. Why did the Jews – Jesus own people – not return to express thanks? Did they see healing as their “due” as God’s chosen people? Why did only the Samaritan return? Was it because it was not out of his way as he went to show himself to the priests where the Samaritans worshipped? Was it because of simple gratitude? After all, leprosy was a sentence of slow death and ostracism from the community. To be healed was to have life restored, both in terms of health and relationships. Or it may be that the Samaritan, through his physical healing, felt also God’s acceptance of him as a person. He received far more than physical healing. He received salvation.

What does this little story say to us? First, I think, is to consider how richly we are blessed, and the extent to which we take these blessings for granted. And then to consider how blessed we are to know Christ and his salvation. And second, how do we express our gratitude to God for the incredible bounty of his gifts to us? This story clearly illustrates that God cares for all people. Therefore, as his people, this is our calling as well. How do we reach out to the “Samaritans” in our midst – those who may feel excluded for any of a number of reasons. Our answer is the way in which we express our gratitude to God.

**Bev Jensen**

**Friday (day9) – Luke 18:1-8**

**There was a widow in that town**

Jesus said, “There once was an uncaring judge who ignored both God and the opinions of other people. A woman of very little status came to him again and again complaining about the way she was being treated. For awhile the judge ignored her. But finally he said to himself. ‘I don’t care what God may want, and I don’t care what other people may think. So there isn’t a reason on this earth why I have to do anything for this woman. But she is a nuisance. Like a slow faucet, she never stops dripping her complaint. I will give her what she is asking for just to get rid of her.’

Then Jesus asks, “If someone like that will work out a better situation for someone without much social status, don’t you think God will do as much for the people God loves when they cry out night and day? Of course God will, and quickly!”

Then Luke adds this comment: “When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?”

Jesus sounds, here, as if he feels thoroughly frustrated: “How could you possibly not realize what God is like?!”

Prayer: If answers seem to come slowly, O God, help us to remember who you are!

**Linda Holt**

**Saturday (day10) – Luke 18:9-14**

**The tax collector stood at a distance**

“for every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”  
(Luke 18:14)

Words are not always what they seem to be. Here we have a religious man giving thanks to God, which is an essential trait of any good life. But Jesus shows how thin is the veneer of his thanks, for it vaunts itself above others. Perhaps we as a nation, we as individuals need to sing, “Shame our wanton, selfish gladness, rich in things and poor in soul.” (LBW 415)

The tax-collector’s prayer has become the basis for a tradition in the Eastern Orthodox Church called the “Jesus Prayer.” It is a way of praying continuously, as Paul exhorts us to do, by repeating the phrase. “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” Silently praying this prayer for 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening can make a big difference to one’s prayer life. It is not trying to impress God, but is a way of being present to God, with hands open – to offer and receive.

God wants to change our hearts to be more like the humble man and less like the arrogant one. Take time to let the Spirit work today, whether you “feel like it” or not. A willful heart can be melted; a willing heart is God’s gift.

**Bradley Holt**

**Monday (day11) – Luke 18:15-17**

**Let the Children come to me.**

When children are with Jesus they appear to be very happy. In this text children, even infants, were being brought to Jesus that He might touch them. Jesus' disciples thought that He didn't want to be bothered. They rebuked the mothers telling them to leave Jesus alone. On the contrary, Jesus rebuked the disciples for such actions. Jesus said, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

Jesus invites not only children, but everyone to come unto Him. It is so much easier to come to Jesus as a child than to wait until one becomes an adult. Children are much more receptive to Jesus who further states, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it." Could Jesus make it any clearer?

Many years ago I heard a pastor say, "The cry of a baby in church is more music to the ears of God than the snore of a saint." If there are children in our family we are to bring them to Jesus at an early age like we are commanded to do. In baptism we do this, but this is just the beginning. We are to continue nurturing them in the Word of God in the home and by bringing where they can continue to grow in their Christian faith.

During the Lenten Season we have the wonderful opportunity to teach our children that Jesus loved us so much that He laid down his life for us and He was put to death on a cross because of our sins. Thanks be to God that Jesus did not stay on the cross, nor in the grave, but He rose from the dead on Easter morning, thus providing eternal salvation for anyone who accepts Jesus as personal Savior.

May each of us have this childlike faith which is essential to enter God's eternal glory.

**Wally Hanson**

## **Tuesday (day12) – Luke 18:18-30**

### **The Spiritual Power of Money**

When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and we will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”  
(Luke 18:22)

This story speaks powerfully to today’s booming economy. The appealing rich ruler lives a clean, moral life. He not only knew the ten commandments... he has obeyed them since he was a youth. And his interest in spiritual things is not limited to doing right on this earth. He has a spiritual hunger. He wants to know about the afterlife. “What must I do to inherit eternal life?”

He hears Jesus’ answer and it makes him very sad. As it turns out, there is a god in his life stronger than the God of his youth. He can’t give up his money.

Jesus asks him to give away all of his money because he knows that is the only way to break the fearful hold that money has on him.

Jesus doesn’t ask us all to give away everything. But he does ask us to put God above money. Christians with a lifetime of faithful financial stewardship tell us that their habits of faithful giving have an amazing, unexpected result. When they give regularly, off the top, prayerfully asking God to bless the use of their gifts, money loses its power over them. Giving becomes fun. Their other money-handling habits improve. They don’t lie awake nights worrying about money.

God doesn’t need our money. God owns the whole world and everything in it. But we need to give.

**Inez Schwarzkopf**

**Wednesday (day13) – Luke 18:31-34**

**We are going up to Jerusalem**

And taking the twelve, he said to them,

"See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise."

But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said.

**Thursday (day14) – Luke 19:1-10**

**Zacchaeus, come down**

“Zacchaeus, make hast and come down; for I must stay at your house today.” (Luke 19:5)

“Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost.” (Luke 19:9)

In these passages Luke once again emphasizes how Jesus Christ came to save the lost and sinful man. Jesus continues to see the need in a person like Zacchaeus, and seeks to meet it.

Zacchaeus obviously knew there had to be something about this man with the crowd that had gathered to see him. Because he was short and wanted a good view of Jesus, he climbed into a large common shade tree, know as Sycamore Tree to see Him.

As Jesus passed by, he spotted Zacchaeus and encouraged Zacchaeus to come down because he was going to stay at his house. This crowd began to talk amongst themselves about Jesus being a guest of a man who was a sinner. Jesus continues to show compassion to sinners by not shying away from them but by coming alongside of them even in their homes.

You can read for yourself the testimony that Zacchaeus gives to Jesus and what Jesus’ response was to Zacchaeus. What will your testimony be for Jesus and what will his response be to you?

**Ron Peterson**

**Friday (day15) – Luke 19:28-40**

**The stones would cry out**

“I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.” (Luke 19:40)

Have you been so excited and happy, so filled with joy, so jubilant, that it was difficult, in fact impossible, to restrain from telling someone, anyone, everyone about what you know about your feelings, about your emotions?

When on Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem His multitude of disciples were so exuberant, so fervent, so unrestrained in their rejoicing and praising with a loud voice for the mighty works that they had seen that the whole world has noticed and has not forgotten.

How about us? How about you? How about me? Are we like Jesus’ disciples, rejoicing and praising God? Do we keep silent about Jesus’ death on the cross which did atone for our sins? Are we excited and happy about the daily blessings we receive? Have we been like stones, hard and mute?

Gisela Konopla, the University of Minnesota professor who has just celebrated her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, has for more than a half century said, “I must never, never, never forget” the atrocities inflicted upon her and the Jewish people during the Nazi regime.

How about us?

We know God’s love. We know that Jesus died for us. We know that He is with us always, as our Counselor, our Friend, our Savior. We must tell, and never, never, never let anyone forget about our Father in heaven. We must rejoice and praise Him for all the mighty works which we have seen.

Dear God, Let us not be like stones! O for a thousand tongues to shout! Amen.

**Addell Dahlen**



**Saturday (day16) – Luke 19:41-44**

**They will not leave on stone on another**

And when he drew near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying,

"Would that you, even you, had known on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes.

For the days will come upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you and surround you and hem you in on every side and tear you down to the ground, you and your children within you. And they will not leave one stone upon another in you, because you did not know the time of your visitation."

**Monday (day17) – Luke 19:45-48**

**A Den of Robbers**

And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold, saying to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."

And he was teaching daily in the temple. The chief priests and the scribes and the principal men of the people were seeking to destroy him, but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were hanging on his words.

## **Tuesday (day18) – Luke 20:9-16**

### **A man planted a vineyard**

“A man planted a vineyard, and let it to tenants,” (Luke 20:9)

The parable (also related in Matthew 21 and in Mark 12) is but one of several which Jesus told while speaking in the temple at Jerusalem during Passion Week. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking to destroy Jesus, but they could find nothing they could do to him, and his listeners hung unto his every word.

Peek’s Bible Commentary refers to this story as an allegory rather than a parable: i.e., the “details and not only the total thrust of it have significance to the understanding”. The owner of the vineyard is God, the vineyard is Israel, the tenants are the leaders of Israel, the servants are God’s prophets, and the son, of course, is Jesus Christ.

As each servant came to collect some of the fruits of the vineyard at harvest time, each was beaten and sent away empty-handed. Finally, the son was sent, with the hope that he would be respected and given the fruits of the harvest but that was not to be. In addition to being denied the fruits to which he was entitled, he was cast out of the vineyard, and killed, so that the tenants could take all that rightfully belonged to the son.

Verses 15:b asks the question, “What will the owner of the vineyard do to them?” The answer in verse 16 explains that the owner will destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others, referring, it is believed, to the Gentiles. A harsh judgment in the eyes of the priests and the scribes, who exclaimed, “God forbid!”

As we meditate on these words, we ask ourselves, “How could they (Israelites) do such cruel things? We would never do anything like that! And very likely we wouldn’t, so how does this story, told 2000 years ago, apply to our lives today? Are we willing to give back to God all that is His? Or do we think our possessions and our assets are ours, to use as we wish? Are we willing to share with others (those who may be a bit different from us) as God would have us to do? Are we willing to welcome others (those who may be a bit different from us) into our midst, or are we content to enjoy the “status quo” of our cozy little congregation, which is in a real sense or “family”. I, for one, enjoy and depend on our little “family”, but in my better moments I do know that it is our duty as Christians to reach out to others, even though they may differ from us in many ways, and invite them in to share God’s kingdom as it is proclaimed here at St. Luke’s. May God’s will be done in our midst.

**Vonnie Dinter**

## Wednesday (day19) – Luke 20:17-19

### The stone the builder rejected

But he looked at them and said,

“What then is this that is written:

‘The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner’? Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces: but when it falls on anyone it will crush him.”

Jesus was quoting from Psalm 118. The reference is taken from verses 19 through 24.

Open to me the gates of righteousness that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord.

I thank Thee that thou hast answered me and hast become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Jesus is speaking to scribes and the Pharisees knowing that they would recall the reference in the Psalms. This verse speaks of His own rejection. He is making them aware of their own self righteousness.

Can we be blind to the truth? Do we reject the head of the corner? (The one that can give strength to our lives?)

Prayer: God of our salvation, this is the day which the Lord had made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen

**Jane Norman**

**Thursday (day20) – Luke 20:20-26**

**Show me a denarius (coin)**

So they watched him and sent spies, who pretended to be sincere, that they might catch him in something he said, so as to deliver him up to the authority and jurisdiction of the governor. So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." And they were not able in the presence of the people to catch him in what he said, but marveling at his answer they became silent.

**Friday (day21) – Luke 21:1-4**

**She gave all she had**

“Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them; for they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all the living that she had.”

How do you explain it from our point of view?

The woman paid more because she paid 100%. The rich people paid maybe 10%. They may pay more money but she gave until it hurt.

The rich man wanted to show that he is so generous – blah, blah, blah – for show and looked down on her giving so little. But she gave all she had.

She gave from the heart.

This shows that Jesus wants us to give with a willing heart.

**Maria Hansen and Tasha Peterson**

**Saturday (day22) – John 13:1-11**

**Unless I wash you, you have no part of me**

“What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.” (John 11:7)

I have often wondered if the disciples had any idea what they were in for when they agreed to attend the dinner Jesus had arranged. I'm sure if I had been one of them I would have thought primarily about the lefse, rollepølse, sardines, rommegrot and blodkage. Much was happening at this particular Passover, and a good meal has often been a means of pushing overwhelming events into the background and giving all attention to what is far more pleasant – taking time to relax, feast and regroup.

They did not know it but their world was coming to an end and none of them, even Judas, could foresee the climax. It is quite clear that Jesus knew about the double agent among them. While it was cause for some preoccupation, it did not keep him from giving them one more bit of advice: Unless they took the attitude of a servant, they would miss the purpose of the dramatic events now unfolding.

I know I have not really understood that attitude, though I've seen it displayed in many ways, by people throughout history and by many of my acquaintances. I've probably had Peter's approach: “Don't wash my feet; I'm clean enough, and you are so much greater than I.” What a shattering thought to Peter (and to me) that unless Jesus is permitted to “wash our feet” – to do for us first what we are expected to do for others – the message of the Cross would not get through.

Reprinted from St. Luke's Lenten Meditations (1991)

**Tom Valvik**

**Monday (day23) – John 14:15-21**

**Another Counselor – The Spirit of truth**

Jesus says,

“If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Counselor, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (John 14:15-17)

After Pentecost, when God gave his holy spirit, his spirit has dwelt in everyone who has accepted Jesus as Savior. Jesus said that how we keep his commandments is an evidence of our love for Him. The Holy Spirit makes us tough in hanging on to God’s word in obedience to Him. The Holy Spirit makes us tender in our attitudes and behavior towards people as we show our willingness to forgive, to be compassionate and helpful. A friend once described our toughness as having the solidarity of a Lake Superior agate and our tenderness as being like old linen.

What makes living the Christian life feasible is that the Holy Spirit lives in me and you. Life’s experiences make me want more wisdom and strength than I have. Human wisdom is not enough. So much of what I see, hear, and read is a temptation to be caught up in a life style which is not what Jesus tells us to live. His spirit is our Counselor, the Spirit of Truth, who guides us each day.

Prayer: Spirit divine, all my being refine, so that I help to make thy kingdom dome. Amen.

**Doris Mikelson**



## **Tuesday (day24) – John 15:1-15**

### **I am the true vine**

Jesus is the source of faith for human beings, the true vine of God. God the Father gives eternal life to human kind through Jesus Christ's blood and sacrifice for our sins, on the cross.

Everyone who does not share their faith with others and seek to save them from the devil is cast into eternal damnation! But everyone who shares God's love and compassion with their fellow human beings, will be saved!

If you hear the work of god and believe, and act on that, you will be in union with Christ.

Without Jesus believers are powerless. Through the vine of communication with Christ, an answer is given to all requests for they are asked in His name and in line with the Father's will. The fruits of love and obedience are the marks of true discipleship. The Son's love to the disciples has been grounded in the Father's love to the Son. The pattern of their love and obedience rests on the relationship between the Father and the Son. Love and joy characterize the spiritual union of the disciples with their Lord. His joy is also theirs. He bids them love each other for the reason that His love is set on them. A love which fulfills the highest test by the voluntary sacrifice of life for others.

The emphasis is upon the uniqueness of the thing sacrificed, namely the life of the Son of God, who dies voluntarily for His friends, if they do the things which he commands. He no longer calls them bond servants for a bond servant has not knowledge of his Lord's aim and purpose. He has made known all things that I have heard of my Father. They have been uniquely initiated into the father's purpose and have received divine truth and teaching. He has chosen them and sent them forth into the world to carry out his work.

**Jack Norman**

**Wednesday (day25) – John 16:29-33**

**I have overcome the world**

His disciples said, “Ah, now you are speaking plainly, not in any figure! Now we know that you know all things, and need none to question you; by this we believe that you came from God.”

Jesus answered them,

“Do you now believe? The hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, every man to his home, and will leave me alone; yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said this to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation: but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”

**Thursday (day26) – Luke 21:29-36**

**Look at the fig tree**

And he told them a parable;

“Look at the fig tree, and all the trees; as soon as they come out in leaf, you see for yourselves and know that the summer is already near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that the kingdom of God is near. Truly, I say to you this generation will not pass away till all has taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my works will not pass away.

“But take heed to yourselves lest your hearts be weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and cares of this life, and that day come upon you suddenly like a snare; for it will come upon all who dwell upon the face of the whole earth. But watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of man.”

**Friday (day27) – Luke 22:7-13**

**Go and prepare for the Passover**

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying,

“Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.”

They said to him, Where will you have us prepare it?”

He said to them,

“Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters, and tell the householder, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?’, and he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready.”

And they went, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

**Saturday (day28) – Luke 22:14-23**

**Do this in remembrance of me**

“Take this, and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” (Luke 22:17-18)

“This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19)

“This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:20)

The simple messages seem to be the hardest to follow. Or is it that God knows that people cannot help themselves?

There are three messages in these ten verses. First, Jesus lets us know that God is eager to help us help ourselves.

Second, through Holy Communion we confess our sins and ask for forgiveness and it will be granted.

Third, like Judas betraying Jesus is the same as not believing. Believing is the key along with confessing our sins and asking for forgiveness.

Simple? Believe, confess and ask for forgiveness. Very simple.

**Wayne Espelien**

## **Monday (day29) – 22:39-46**

### **Why are you sleeping?**

“Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

“Why do you sleep? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” (Luke 22:46)

Jesus knew what was unfolding. This is the beginning of what spiritual leaders call “the dark night of the soul.” When all pray and meditation and efforts seem to elicit a great “nothing.” It’s a darkness devoid of even blackness. It is like having eternity opened up to you and seeing nothing.

An angel appeared and gave him strength. The angel did not move Jesus through this darkness. The angel only gave him the strength to continue. Indeed, Luke indicates that following the angel’s advice Jesus intensified his efforts to the point of “sweating blood,” with the same results. There is just more nothingness.

To me this is the absolute worst of worse. And this “dark night of the soul” is “reserved” for those of faith. For those without faith is the luxury of hopelessness. No expectations. Without faith one never has to go through it. In fact, even with faith many of us may never need to go through this. But if you have been through this “dark night” you can begin to understand and have empathy for what Jesus is going through here. And if not, perhaps you will, but I pray not.

God loves you.

**Guy Evers**

**Tuesday (day30) – Luke 22:47-51**

**Judas, you are betraying ...**

“Judas, would you betray the Son of man with a kiss?” (Luke 22:48)

Jesus knew his betrayer.

I suppose the nature of betrayal means that it is someone close. He told his disciples who his betrayer was and then went on with what he had to do. In this passage, Jesus is in the Garden of Gethsemane and completely identifies Judas.

I think that Jesus is teaching us how to cope when betrayed. He is not about to seek revenge or try to garner support for himself. He simply allows it to happen without intervention or retaliation.

We could say that he knew it was a part of the divine plan of salvation and that would override any human reaction. But I think it is more than that. To be perfectly human we can allow betrayal and forgive.

I have a hard time forgiving someone for talking against me or criticizing me. But, I know the one who can help me know that perfect love.

Lord, help us to forgive so that we can truly pray: “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.” Amen.

**Jane Norman**

## **Wednesday (day31) – Luke 22:54-62**

### **What would I do?**

The Lord turned and looked at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, “Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times.” (Luke 22:61)

Poor Peter. For 2000 years this shameful denial of Christ has tainted and colored our admiration of his energetic discipleship. When the chips were down, Peter didn't have the courage of his convictions. He had been so sure that he'd never break. Yet when he did, he didn't even recognize what he was doing until Jesus reminded him.

This story scares me. How can I be sure I wouldn't have done the same? In a crisis, would I follow my convictions or hide behind handy with lies?

Would I have been one of the “good” Germans who refused to go along with the Nazis? Would I have hidden runaway slaves? Do I even open my mouth to object when I hear language that demeans God or any of God's creatures?

The young people who wear bracelets with the initials WWJD may reduce complex theology to a simple slogan, “What would Jesus do?” But they're committed to wearing a reminder to do what's right in all situations. I admire them for that. Like Peter, we all need to be reminded. We need to live in such a way that people expect us to speak up for our faith.

The good news is this story is that God forgave even Peter's denial. Peter's legacy doesn't rest on this story, but on his confession, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” when Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?”

**Inez Schwarzkopf**



**Thursday (day32) – Luke 22:66-23:4**

**King of the Jews**

When the day came, the assembly of the elders of the people gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away to their council and they said, “If you are the Christ, tell us.” But he said to them,

“If I tell you, you will not believe; and if I ask you, you will not answer. But from now on the son of man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

And they all said, “Are you the Son of God, then?” And he said to them,

“You say that I am.”

And they said, “What further testimony do we need? We have heard it ourselves from his own lips.”

Then the whole company of them arose, and brought him before Pilate and they began to accuse him, saying, “We found this man perverting our nation, and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar and saying that he himself is Christ a king.”

And Pilate asked him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” and he answered him,

“You have said so.”

And Pilate said to the chief priests and the multitudes, “I find no crime in this man.”

Prayer: Lord, help us so that we are open to the true significance of your life. Amen.

**Friday (day33) – Luke 23:33-34**

**Father forgive them**

When they came to the place called the The Skull, there they crucified him, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” (Luke 23:33-34)

Jesus could forgive under these circumstances. He had been falsely accused, severely beaten, and now he was being painfully executed on the cross. Able to forgive at this moment, Jesus revealed his willingness to forgive all people for all time.

As we listen to Jesus’ words from the cross. “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing,” we are given a glimpse of His compassion and love for the world. His words of forgiveness are not a one time event but are the foundation for generations to come. Because of Jesus’ forgiveness we are given an opportunity to have a relationship with God.

Reconciliation has taken place. As we listen to Jesus words of forgiveness, do we believe that he has forgiven us as well? Can we forgive others as he has forgiven us?

Lord Jesus, help us to forgive each other and to believe in the depths of our hearts that you have forgiven us. Amen.

**Jim Gullickson**

**Saturday (day34) – Luke23:39-43**

**You will be with me in paradise**

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him saying, “Are you the Christ? Save yourself and us!”

But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you to fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man had son nothing wrong.”

And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

And he said to him,

“Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”

Prayer: O Lord, help us like the thief on the cross see our own need for forgiveness. Amen.

**Monday (day35) – John 19:25-27**

**“Woman, behold your son.”**

**“Behold your mother.”**

On the cross Jesus spoke to his mother and his disciple, John. He asked them to care for each other as if they were mother and son.

Families are a precious gift from God and he wants to care for them no matter what obstacles get in the way. If arguments divide us, we must find ways to forgive and be reconciled. If we neglect one another, we must restore the closeness we once had.

It is important for me to understand that part of my walk of faith requires me to spend whatever time and energy is necessary to build all the relationships in my family. I need to spend time with my spouse, children, and parents making sure each one understands I love them. I need to ask for forgiveness from those I have neglected. I need to understand and be reconciled with those I have a broken relationship with. If it is important to God, it needs to be most important to me.

Gracious God, guide us in our thoughts and ways. Thank you for the forgiveness given to us through your son, Jesus. Amen.

**Maxine and Gary Olson**

## Tuesday (day36) – Mark 15:33-34

“Jesus cried out with a loud voice. . . ‘**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?**’”

(Matthew 27:46)

This verse is the only time in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John that Jesus addressed his Heavenly Father with the formal title, “God”. On every other occasion when Jesus referred to God he used the warm and affectionate title, “Abba” which is the term a Jewish boy or girl of Jesus’ time would use to address their father. That fact seems to suggest that here Jesus did indeed experience a different relationship with God, a relationship that was in fact one of abandonment by Him. That moment on the cross was for Jesus no virtual separation but a forsakenness by God that was real and genuine.

Why was it necessary for Jesus on the cross to experience such abandonment from God? Abandonment was a righteous and sinless God’s response to the sin that has infected all people, a sin that Jesus on the cross voluntarily took on his person in order to win for a human race overwhelmed by sin the acceptance of God. Jesus on the cross took our place, achieved the eradication of our guilt, and the forgiveness of God. It apparently could not be accomplished in any other way.

But Jesus’ cry of anguish on the cross speaks not only to the matter of our reconciliation with God, but also to the tragic and despairing times our daily lives bring us, times of illness, divorce, false accusations, betrayal, separation, losing a job, bankruptcy, afflicted children, violence and so forth. In those moments we are inclined to ask a question not unlike Jesus’ question – “My God, why?” In such times Jesus’ question becomes our question. And often it is a question for which we can find no satisfying or adequate answer.

Such moments of anguish and despair and God’s apparent silence over against such moments have caused some to wonder both publicly and privately about God’s actual existence. “If God exists, why does He forsake His people in such moments? Why is God silent and seemingly inactive when evil and tragedy and injustice and suffering seem so common place in the world? If He is God, why does He not act to make things right and whole?” Like Jesus on the cross we ask, “My God, why?”

The answer the Christian faith has traditionally offered in response to those questions is that God is not deaf to our pleas nor is he insensitive to the tragedies that daily get played out in our personal lives. But “God is God” which is to say that God keeps his own counsel, set His agenda in accordance with His own will and acts in a manner consistent with His own will and acts in a manner consistent with His own time schedule. To hear the promises of God found in the Scriptures is to believe God will act and ultimately He will set right all that is now unjust and tragic in our world.

In the meanwhile, we find hope for our daily lives even in this cry of anguish and abandonment spoken by Jesus on the cross. Jesus cried out, “My God, my God, why. . .?” That suggests that he believed that his Heavenly Father would not ultimately remain silent nor forsake him. His future held more than tragedy and separation. It also held hope. Apparently, hope can be present even in the midst of tragedy and despair when God is the object of such hope. As Jesus was sure that God would not ultimately forsake him, so we as God’s people can believe that He will not abandon us. Over against the words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” comes another word from the Scriptures that enables us to live daily in hope. “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”

**Carl Jensen**

## **Wednesday (day37) – John 19:28-29**

### **I am thirsty**

When I saw the words “I am thirsty” vivid memories burst forth in my mind. Last summer I was in the magnificent but harsh desert region of southern Utah. Intense sun, 100 degree temperatures, miles to hike – and no water. Have you felt what it is like to be thirsty, really thirsty? Your mouth and throat are parched, internal organs seem like glutinous oatmeal, and skin goes dry. Jesus must have felt that way after hanging on the cross in full sun.

When the opportunity comes to quench your thirst, you are amazed how much clear cool water your body can take in? Remember the pleasure it brings? Jesus received no relief. He had sour wine, or early stages of vinegar, placed against his dry lips.

Without water we perish. One of our basic physical drives is to satiate our thirst. Christ was denied water during his last few moments of life on earth. Earlier, however, Jesus told us, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” That eternal water flowed freely from his death on the cross.

**John Schnickel**

**Thursday (day38) – Luke 23:44-46**

**I commit my spirit**

It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said,

“Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit!”

‘And He did bow his head, and rendered up His spirit. And it was about the sixth hour; and the sun was darkened, and darkness covered the earth, until about the ninth hour; and the veil of the temple was rent and all the earth did quake; and the rocks were rent, and all the graves were opened wide.

Prayer: Christ, we do all adore thee, and we do praise Thee forever; for on the holy cross has the world from sin redeemed.’

**Christ, we do all adore thee.**

From ‘The Seven Last Words of Christ’ a sacred cantata.

**Friday (day39) – John 19:30**

**It is finished**

“It is finished.” (John 19:30)

Many years ago when our children were very young, we had a five year old boy stay with our family for several months. As an adolescent, his mother had been adopted by a relative and because of personal struggles, she was unable to raise him.

A short time after “Wade” came to us, an extended family member died and we attended the visitation at a mortuary chapel. Being curious about death and having a little nurturing in the Christian faith, my cousin explained the “Uncle Mel” was in heaven where there is no sickness or pain.

Later on we left the chapel, “Wade” who had never experienced such a beautiful setting said to us, “Hey, g..g..guess what! This is heaven!”

Death is difficult to understand and explain. We know about the mystery of death from what Jesus taught us in his own life, death and resurrection.

“Father, help us to live as your people so that when our lives here are finished, you can welcome us into your heavenly kingdom. Amen.”

**Sharon Gullickson**



**Saturday (day40) – Luke 24:13-27**

**On the road to Emmaus**

That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, and talking with each other about all these things that had happened. While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him and he said to them,

“What is this conversation which you are holding with each other as you walk?”

And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them,

“What things?”

And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, . . . . .

And he said to them,

“O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Prayer: Lord help us to listen, help us to hear, help us to see, may we know you and may our foolishness be turned into wisdom. Amen.

## **Easter Sunday – Luke 24:44-53**

### **You are my witnesses**

Then he said to them,

“These are my words which I spoke to you, while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the psalms must be fulfilled.”

Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, and said to them,

“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Then he led them out as far as Bethany, and lifting up his hands he blessed them. While he blessed them, he departed from them, and was carried up into heaven. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple blessing God.