A world map is mounted on a light-colored wall. The map is rendered in shades of brown and tan. Below the map, a wooden table is visible, and under the table, several wooden stools are tucked under. In the foreground, the back of a dark brown leather tufted sofa is visible. The entire scene is overlaid with a semi-transparent brown filter.

SPRING 2023

# DEVOTED: 16 DAYS OF PRAYER

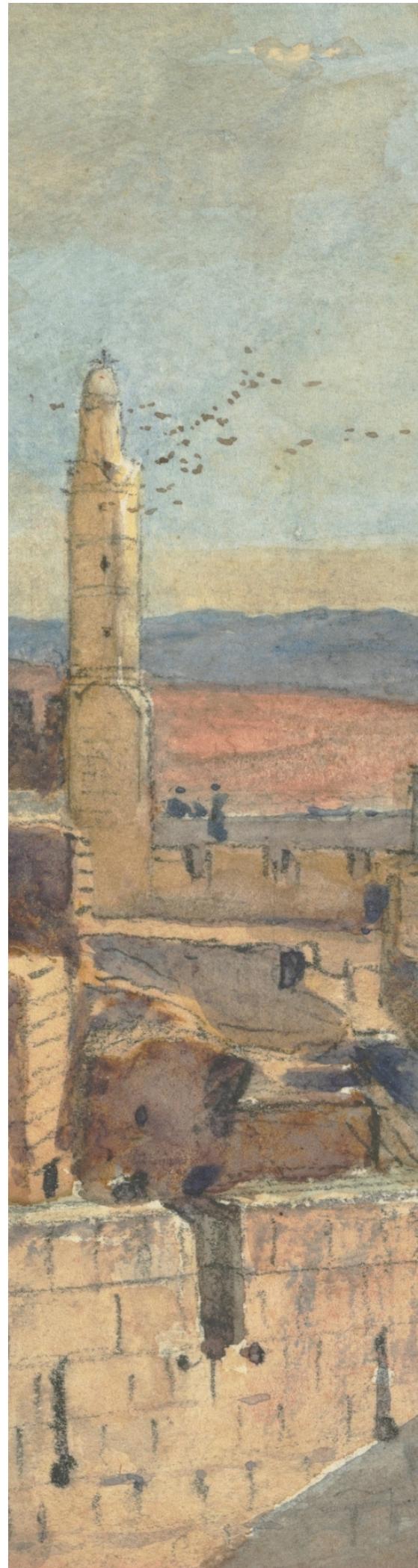
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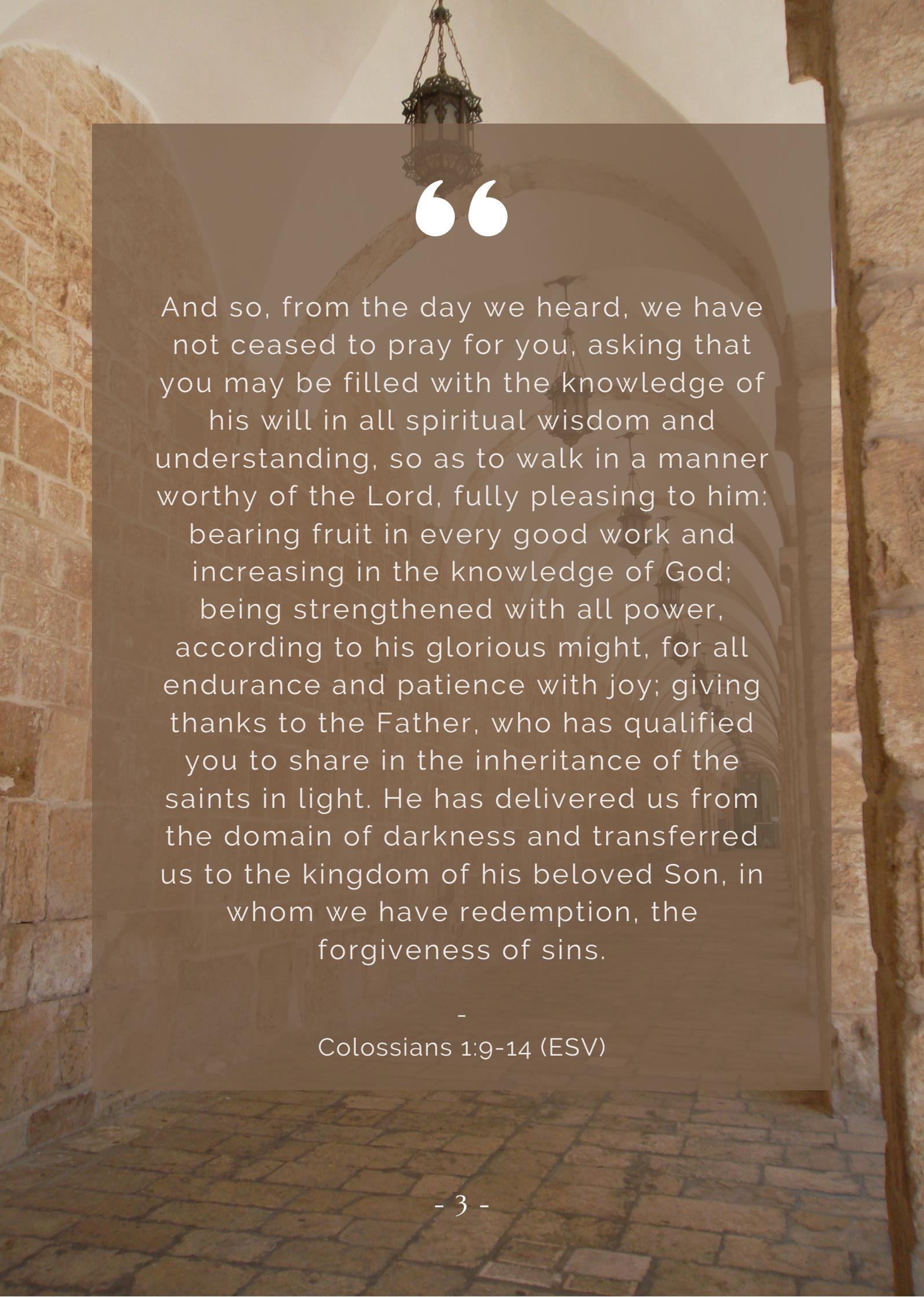
an Imago Dei prayer guide  
through the lens of Luke

[IDCRALEIGH.COM](http://IDCRALEIGH.COM)

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	04
<u>EVENTS</u>	07
<u>DAY 1 - MARCH 25</u>	08
<u>DAY 2 - MARCH 26</u>	15
<u>DAY 3 - MARCH 27</u>	20
<u>DAY 4 - MARCH 28</u>	27
<u>DAY 5 - MARCH 29</u>	33
<u>DAY 6 - MARCH 30</u>	40
<u>DAY 7 - MARCH 31</u>	46
<u>DAY 8 - APRIL 1</u>	53
<u>DAY 9 - APRIL 2</u>	59
<u>DAY 10 - APRIL 3</u>	65
<u>DAY 11 - APRIL 4</u>	71
<u>DAY 12 - APRIL 5</u>	78
<u>DAY 13 - APRIL 6</u>	84
<u>DAY 14 - APRIL 7</u>	91
<u>DAY 15 - APRIL 8</u>	97
<u>DAY 16 - APRIL 9</u>	104
<u>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</u>	109
<u>ADDITIONAL RESOURCES</u>	110





“

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

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Colossians 1:9-14 (ESV)

## INTRODUCTION

# A PEOPLE DEVOTED TO PRAY

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## the heart behind this prayer emphasis

Jesus makes it clear through one of his parables on a persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8, that we “ought always to pray and not lose heart.” This seems to be in alignment with many other passages on prayer elsewhere in the Bible. We are to “pray at all times in the Spirit,” “making supplication for all the saints” (Ephesians 6:18-20); to “be constant in prayer” (Romans 12:12); to “not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be known to God” (Philippians 4:6); to “continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2); to “seek the Lord and his strength, seek his presence continually” (1 Chronicles 16:11); and to hold “fast to the Head, from whom the whole body, nourished and knit together through its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God” (Colossians 2:19); such “that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored” (2 Thessalonians 3:1).

We want to be a people who are devoted to prayer (Acts 2:42; Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2). In light of our desire to be a praying people, the Imago Dei elders have decided to call Imago Dei Church to a season of corporate prayer for 16 days leading up to Easter Sunday, April 9, 2023.

Here is how we will set aside these 16 days before Easter for fervent prayer:

The 16 days of prayer will kick off on Saturday, March 25, at 9:00 a.m. with a city prayer walk alongside several other area churches, hosted at Vintage Church Downtown. For the next 16 days, we will pray together through a daily devotional inspired from various passages throughout the Gospel of Luke. Each Saturday (Saturday, April 1 and Holy Saturday, April 8), we will gather together for a special time of concentrated corporate prayer and worship. These prayer-focused events will be in addition to our customary Maundy Thursday (April 6, at 6pm) and Good Friday (April 7, at noon) services, which we tend to do each year.

## how to use this guide

This guide is divided into daily prayer devotional rhythms. Each day will be marked by three movements: (1) rereading and meditating on a passage from the Gospel of Luke; (2) reflecting on the passage by reading a devotional written by an Imago Dei Church member; (3) and praying through six prompts that were inspired by the passage in Luke.

Each devotional is written by a different member of Imago Dei Church, but they are all designed to help us reflect on the passage in a way that allows us to glory in Jesus, see ourselves rightly, and respond faithfully. At the end of each devotional, the passage inspired prayer prompts are divided into three parts. These are designed to help us respond to the passage by (1) looking inward in

repentance and gratitude (personally, praying for ourselves); (2) looking at one another as the body of Christ asking for the Lord's grace (corporately, praying for the church); and (3) looking outward to the lost around us, that they may come to know Jesus (missionally, praying for the mission of Christ among the lost).

## our prayer for IDC

Hopefully, time praying together through passages in Luke's Gospel will help work some of these truths down deeper into our hearts and lives. We are praying that this season of prayer as a church cultivates our affections for Christ and helps to shape us more and more into his likeness. We are praying that as we commune with Christ together through prayer, the love of Christ will spill out into the lives of those he has placed around us.

Let's remember what Jesus said in Luke 18. At the end of his parable about the persistent widow, Jesus asks, "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" **Will he find faith among us here at Imago Dei Church?** "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16) in prayer together, that he may help us to this end.

- the elders of Imago Dei Church

## EVENTS

[SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE HERE](#)

### 03.25

#### **KICK-OFF: A CITY PRAYER WALK**

9:00 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. // 118 S. Person St,  
an opportunity to walk through  
and pray for our city.

### 04.01

#### **PRAYER GATHERING**

12:00 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.// IDC (Community Room),  
a time of prayer for the global church  
on mission.

### 04.08

#### **24 HOURS OF PRAYER**

04.08 (Sat) 12:00 p.m. - 04.09 (Sun) 12:00 p.m.  
IDC (Community Room)

### 04.09

#### **EASTER SUNDAY**

9 a.m. and 11 a.m. // Imago Dei Church  
worship together - He is Risen!

DAY 1

M A R C H

25

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THE PARABLE OF  
THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke 15:11-32

MARCH 25

## LUKE 15:11-32

**11** And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. **12** And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. **13** Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. **14** And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. **15** So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. **16** And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything.

**17** But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! **18** I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. **19** I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.'" **20** And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. **21** And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' **22** But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet.

MARCH 25

**Luke 15:11-32 (continued)**

**23** And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. **24** For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

**25** "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. **26** And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. **27** And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' **28** But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, **29** but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. **30** But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' **31** And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. **32** It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.'

MARCH 25

## Devotional Reflection

How sweet was the good news of salvation when you first believed? When the Lord opened your eyes to the beauty that you were loved extravagantly, not because of your merit but because of the riches of his grace and mercy, how did that feel? Perhaps, like me, you were very young when you believed, yet there are moments when the wonder of Jesus' great love grips you afresh.

The perfect, almighty God, creator of everything and perfectly knowing everyone has set his love on me through the work of Jesus. I was his enemy but now I'm his child. I number among his people. What good news for sinners!

But if we're honest, we can easily forget what the Father is like. We believe other stories about him. We imagine him as harsh, continually disappointed in our failure, exasperated even. Like the wayward son, we imagine a best-case scenario where we are demoted to the status of a hired worker in the house of our Father. As he did in the garden, the serpent distorts the character of God and we doubt his benevolence toward us. Or like the older son, we begrudgingly cling to our merits as the proof that we belong here, and we treat others with severity to silence our own insecurity about where we fit into the Father's house.

In this parable, Jesus corrects our perception with a fresh reminder of that tenderness we tasted when he first saved us.

## MARCH 25

Beholding the Father as he has revealed himself, we don't find him harsh or impatient at all. His love never expires, it is never exhausted. His riches in grace are immeasurable and as you would expect from someone so rich, he spends lavishly—and this he does through his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. When we sin, our Father isn't preoccupied that we wasted the family fortune. His riches are never at risk. His love and compassion for his children are the expression on his face.

Look to the Father and behold him as he is—rejoicing over his children and continually displaying his immeasurable riches in grace.

Yet it would also be a mistake to imagine such lavish love cheaply. The kind of love the Father sets on his children is a transforming and purifying love. The lost son eventually comes to his senses and returns home. One of the reasons we distort the image of our Father is that we dress ourselves in the rags of sin and feed ourselves from its swine pods, when we ought to be feasting on Christ. When we behold the Father rightly, we recognize how far from home we've wandered—and we return.

How can we not return to a Father so ready to welcome his children? **Repentance walks us back home and the Father's purifying love makes us clean.** He welcomes our confession and repentance with the robes and rings of sonship. The Father's love forms us into the Father's children and our response is simply to eat his feast and live as sons and daughters.

MARCH 25

Surely to receive this kind of immeasurable love would change the way we look at those far off. No longer counting on our efforts to belong, we rest secure in his love, and knowing his boundless wealth, we can join the celebration as he welcomes many more lost sons and daughters home. We reject the impulse to act as mere servants who bemoan the lack of appreciation for their work when the sons enjoy their sonship. We know we are sons and daughters and rejoice with our Father.

Our God is so much richer in grace, mercy, and love than we can imagine. Our status as his sons and daughters is so much more secure than we fear. God really loves us and that unwavering love will keep us. May his immeasurable love fill us with his fullness to live as sons and daughters every day.

”

Repentance  
walks us back  
home and the  
Father's purifying  
love makes us  
clean.



MARCH 25

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Father, help me to behold you accurately, being rooted and firmly established in your love. Help me to comprehend with all the saints what is the length and width, height and depth of God's love, and to know Christ's love that surpasses knowledge, so that I may be filled with all the fullness of God.*

*Father, let your love open my eyes to my neediness and draw me toward you in repentance and deep trust.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, make us a community marked by the lavish love the Father has set on us, having the posture of sons and daughters, not servants.*

*Lord, let us be a community marked by openness in confession of sin, diligence in repentance, and tenderness in receiving the wayward.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, use us in your redemptive and restorative work in the lives of those around us. Make us faithful to represent the love we have received from God to the lost and helpless he has lovingly and sovereignly placed around us.*

*Father, draw in many from our surrounding communities, causing them to come to their senses by your love, making the wayward into your sons and daughters.*

DAY 2

M A R C H

26

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# A POWERFUL PROPHECY

Luke 1:67-79

MARCH 26

## LUKE 1:67-79

**67** And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

**68** "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,

for he has visited and redeemed his people

**69** and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,

**70** as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

**71** that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;

**72** to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,

**73** the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us

**74** that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

**75** in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

**76** And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways,

**77** to give knowledge of salvation to his people in the forgiveness of their sins,

**78** because of the tender mercy of our God, whereby the sunrise shall visit us from on high

**79** to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death,

to guide our feet into the way of peace."

MARCH 26

## Devotional Reflection

What would your first words be after being mute for over 9 months? Well, about 9 months before Zechariah spoke these words in Luke 1:67-79, an angel visited him and told him that his wife Elizabeth would bear a child. She was barren and advanced in years, but she was going to have a son. The angel said that their son would be great before God and help prepare people for the Lord's coming. However, Zechariah questioned God and, due to his disbelief, he was unable to speak. Eight days after his son's birth, Zechariah named his son "John," according to God's command. Immediately his tongue was loosened, and this passage shows how Zechariah first responded.

This passage shows us that our God is a God who visits us. God sent an angel to personally visit Zechariah. Likewise, the Father sent his Son Jesus to this broken world to save us. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to live in all those who believe in Christ. We also see that our God is a God who saves. He saves us from our enemies, our fear, our sin, from darkness and death!

Additionally, we see that our God is a God who fulfills his promises. God gave Zechariah a son, despite his old age and disbelief. More importantly, God raised up a horn of salvation for all of us, as God had promised through his prophets long ago!

After Zechariah's tongue was loosened, he first praised God for who he was—the Redeemer of his people and the Horn of our salvation. Later, Zechariah declared who his son, John, would be

MARCH 26

—a prophet who would prepare the way for the Lord and give people the knowledge of salvation. **We can only see ourselves rightly when we first see and praise God for who he is.** Then, we can see ourselves for who we are and understand our identity in light of the grand narrative of God's redemptive plan. We were made to “serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days” (v. 74b-75) and “to give people the knowledge of salvation” (v. 77a).

We can only see ourselves rightly when we first see and praise God for who he is.



We, like Zechariah, should praise God first in all things, no matter what we have been through or are going through. Zechariah recognized that the coming of the promised Messiah was worthy of the greatest praise, more than his son's miraculous birth or the ability to speak again. Likewise, we should thank God, above all else, that He has sent the promised Messiah to save us and to save the world. Next, we must ask God for help to live without fear in righteousness and holiness, and to bring the knowledge of salvation and the forgiveness of sins to those living in darkness and in death.



MARCH 26

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*God, you are my Redeemer! You sent Your Son Jesus, the Messiah promised from long ago, to save me from my sins and from death. Thank you!*

*Forgive me, Lord, for how I do not praise you first in all circumstances. Help me to have a heart that is quick to praise You. Help me also to see my purpose and identity in light of who You are and Your redemptive plan for the world.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*God, please help us be a church who serves you without fear, in holiness and righteousness before You all our days!*

*Help us be a people who believe Your Word and who trust that You will fulfill Your promises.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, please use us to bring the knowledge of your salvation and forgiveness of sins to the lost! Show us those around us and around the world who are in darkness and death. Help us to pray for them, go to them and proclaim your gospel to them without fear!*

*God, please help us see our children and one another as Zechariah saw his son John, not for his own purposes or desires, but for your purposes—to bring glory to your Son in a lost world. Help us encourage one another toward the commission you've given us, so that more people may know and praise you, our Redeemer and Messiah.*

DAY 3

M A R C H

27

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BUILD YOUR HOUSE  
ON THE ROCK

Luke 6:46-49

MARCH 27

## LUKE 6:46-49

**46** "Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"

**47** Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like: **48** he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. **49** But the one who hears and does not do them is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

MARCH 27

## Devotional Reflection

In this passage, Jesus is teaching to a large and diverse crowd, perhaps at the Sermon on the Mount. Leading into this section he discusses knowing a tree by its fruit; those who follow Jesus will be producing good fruit, and those that do not will produce bad fruit.

He continues discussing what it looks like to be one of his followers, calling out those who outwardly say they are a disciple but do not actually obey him. In verse 47 he gives us the roadmap of a true disciple: they come to him, they hear his words, and they do them. He illustrates the need to obey him by using a brief parable of two men. One builds his house with a deep foundation, and he is able to withstand the storm that arises. The other, representing those who hear Jesus' teachings and do not obey, builds his house without a foundation and that house is ruined when the storm comes.

We see in this brief story that Jesus desires our obedience. How we respond to his teachings is not below his notice; he truly wants us to come to him, to hear his words, and to obey them. He doesn't want lip service, or an outward garment of response that doesn't sink down to the foundation of a person. He wants genuine obedience that produces steadfastness in the midst of all the difficulties of life.

A second thing this passage teaches us about Christ is that his teachings equate to true wisdom. Those who come to him and

## MARCH 27

call him "Lord, Lord" are not wrong for doing so; he truly is the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. They are wrong for not applying his teaching to their lives in obedience. His teachings are both true and necessary for an enduring, healthy life. Obeying his teaching provides safety and security; choosing not to obey what he tells us is embracing heartache and ruin.

This passage also teaches us about ourselves. If we are truly a follower of Christ, and if we obediently follow his teachings, we will be built up in maturity and security to face all that the world will bring our way. Following Christ doesn't mean avoiding the storm, or sidestepping suffering; both men in the parable face the flood. It does mean having the foundation to endure the hardships we will face.

We also can see the double picture of what being a true follower of Jesus is like. Salvation is not earned through obedience, but obedience always follows true salvation. If we love Jesus, then we will keep his commandments (John 14:15). True, genuine love for Jesus results in obedience. The inverse is also true; whoever obeys Jesus' teaching and keeps his commandments can be identified as one who loves him (John 14:21). If we are believers, our lives must reflect faithful obedience.

Finally, this passage teaches us about the importance of inner change. Those who call Jesus "Lord" publicly but do not obey him are not truly his disciples. The two houses in the story may

MARCH 27

have looked very similar from the outside, but only one was built on a deep foundation. **The Christian life is not for appearances, but for inner change that results in complete obedience.**

So how should we respond in faith to this passage? First, we need to obey the teachings of Jesus. It seems simple, but it's not always easy. Surface-level faith cannot withstand the storm. It will cost us something to obey; being a follower of Jesus will take sacrifice. It took the first man a lot more time, work and resources to dig deep and build a true foundation.

Secondly, we must obey the teachings Jesus provides in his Word. He does not leave us to guess at what he is asking us to

do; we don't come up with it on our own. He has provided everything that is necessary for life and godliness in the pages of the Bible. Spending time in his Word, studying what he has taught us, gives us the starting point for applying his teaching in our lives.

“ The Christian life is not for appearances, but for inner change that results in complete obedience.

Finally, we must be planted deep inside of our Gospel Community. The Christian life is not intended to be lived alone. From a distance we can practice false obedience and “build our

## MARCH 27

house" without a true foundation, but if there are people in our life close enough to see our foundation they can help encourage us towards obedience. We must be present and active in our local church and allow those brothers and sisters in our lives to see us truly.

True discipleship requires obedience to Jesus. It's not easy, it's not quick, and it takes sacrifice. In the end, however, it will produce a lasting foundation that will allow us to weather every storm, and at the end to be with our Savior face to face.



MARCH 27

### **PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, I thank you and praise you for your Word. Thank you for teaching me not only the truth of the Gospel, but the truth of how the Gospel applies to every area of my life.*

*Father, I repent of false obedience. I confess my sin of laziness, selfishness, and pride. Create in me a heart of joyful obedience.*

### **CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Father, we ask that our church would obey the teachings of Jesus. We ask that the pastors would be steadfast in teaching the Word of Christ, and that we would be a church that does not only hear, but responds obediently.*

*God, cause your community of faith to press in around one another. Give those in our church a desire to be a part of one another's lives. Cultivate a culture of true accountability among us so we can expose false discipleship, and to provide encouragement and support in living out true obedience.*

### **MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Sovereign Father, we ask that those in our community will experience real heart change and start building on the only sure foundation, Jesus Christ.*

*God, you are mighty to save. May you grant us boldness as a church to carry the words of Jesus to those around us. May you use Imago Dei to be a part of your work in drawing many in Raleigh to the saving knowledge of Christ.*

DAY 4

M A R C H

28

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TEACH US TO PRAY

Luke 11:1-13

MARCH 28

## LUKE 11:1-13

**1** Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." **2** And he said to them, "When you pray, say:

"Father, hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come.

**3** Give us each day our daily bread,

**4** and forgive us our sins,

for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us.

And lead us not into temptation."

**5** And he said to them, "Which of you who has a friend will go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves, **6** for a friend of mine has arrived on a journey, and I have nothing to set before him'; **7** and he will answer from within, 'Do not bother me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot get up and give you anything'? **8** I tell you, though he will not get up and give him anything because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him whatever he needs.

MARCH 28

**Luke 11:1-13 (continued)**

**9** And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **10** For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. **11** What father among you, if his son asks for [d] a fish, will instead of a fish give him a serpent; **12** or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? **13** If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!"

MARCH 28

## Devotional Reflection

As Jesus walks through life with his disciples, he is constantly teaching them. He knows that his disciples have much to learn before his departure. However, in this passage, his disciples actually ask Jesus to teach them.

This alone is remarkable. For most of their journey and life together, Jesus readily imparts wisdom to his followers, but rarely do we see them seek it from him. Of course, Jesus readily takes this opportunity to teach his followers several important principles about prayer. He uses a story of one friend who reluctantly aids another at midnight, not out of friendship, but out of the other's persistence. Through this interaction between Jesus and his disciples we see a couple of things.

When Jesus responds to the disciple's request, he demonstrates both his powerful authority as well as his gentle compassion and patience. As God, Jesus has the authority to give people the things they ask. This authority also gives him the knowledge of what people need for their good and his glory even if it looks different than anticipated by man. After all, through Christ, God gave us the best gift we could ever ask for or imagine: eternal life and forever union with God through the Holy Spirit in us.

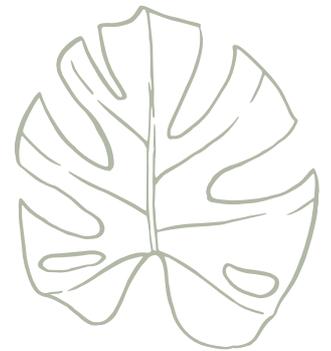
We get a glimpse of our Lord's patience as he answers the disciple's question while also delicately communicating their need for him. In using the parable of the midnight caller, Jesus

## MARCH 28

displays his compassion and goodness in providing the very good gift of the Holy Spirit for a people desperately in need of a Savior.

As we watch Jesus respond to the disciples, we simultaneously learn much about ourselves. Throughout the passage we see our need for Jesus' humanity and his divinity. The disciples need Jesus to properly teach and model how to pray. In doing so, Jesus displays the humble posture that we are to take as we come before a righteous God. The prayer, often referred to as "The Lord's Prayer," not only acknowledges the supreme holiness of God but also reveals the nature of the one praying: one in need of provision, forgiveness, grace, and protection.

As Christ-followers, let us respond to this passage with reverence and awe. Not only does God desire to meet our practical needs, but He is also pleased to meet our more urgent, spiritual needs. Jesus is pleased to give the disciples direct instruction on how to come before the Creator of the universe. Allow the prayer that Jesus provides to act as an outline for your prayers, complete with adoration of the Father and supplication to the only one who can truly satisfy. Let this posture of reverence and awe bring you to humility so that as you make your requests known to God, you can trust that he will answer in a way that is for your good and His glory, even when you may not have full understanding.



MARCH 28

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, teach me to pray in a way that reflects the model you set for your disciples. Holy Spirit, help me pray as I ought!*

*Lord, help me flee self-sufficiency and flock to the authority, compassion, and goodness of Jesus.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, help us be a prayerful people of faith.*

*Father, help our church be a people marked by a heart posture of awe and humility before a holy God.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Father, help us to extend forgiveness to those around us, even those who do not know you.*

*God, put people in our paths for us to tell about Jesus. Cause them to come to repentance and faith in our good Father, who answers prayer and gives good gifts to those who ask of Him.*

DAY 5

M A R C H

29

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THE PARABLE OF  
THE SOWER

Luke 8:4-15

MARCH 29

## LUKE 8:4-15

**4** And when a great crowd was gathering and people from town after town came to him, he said in a parable, **5** "A sower went out to sow his seed. And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot, and the birds of the air devoured it. **6** And some fell on the rock, and as it grew up, it withered away, because it had no moisture. **7** And some fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up with it and choked it. **8** And some fell into good soil and grew and yielded a hundredfold." As he said these things, he called out, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear."

**9** And when his disciples asked him what this parable meant, **10** he said, "To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.' **11** Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. **12** The ones along the path are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe and be saved. **13** And the ones on the rock are those who, when they hear the word, receive it with joy. But these have no root; they believe for a while, and in time of testing fall away. **14** And as for what fell among the thorns, they are those who hear, but as they go on their way they are choked by the cares and riches and pleasures of life, and their fruit does not mature. **15** As for that in the good soil, they are those who, hearing the word, hold it fast in an honest and good heart, and bear fruit with patience."

MARCH 29

## Devotional Reflection

Take a moment to consider where you find yourself in this passage. Are you the sower? Or, are you one of the different types of soil?

The Parable of the Sower is often used as an example for evangelism purposes. We tend to think of ourselves as the sower, the dispenser of the good news of Jesus Christ. We categorize unbelievers as the different types of soil. Some people hear the gospel but dismiss it as truth. Others glean parts of the message they relate to best before falling away from the gospel when crisis arises. Still others desire the gospel but don't want to abandon their societal expectations, or they find that counting the cost of following Christ is too great.

It is easy to read this parable and resonate with the position of the sower, but as we consider it more deeply, we can come to see the same soils that are rejecting God in our own hearts. We can be tempted to seek our own glory, in place of God's glory. We can plan for our own future, instead of trusting what God has for us. We can seek to satisfy the desires of our hearts by our own means, rather than waiting patiently for the Lord's good and right timing. As much as we would like to see ourselves as the sower, we need to take a deeper look at the soil of our own hearts and confess our constant and desperate need for the better and greater Sower.

After the disciples heard this parable, they turned to Jesus and

## MARCH 29

asked what the parable meant. Before answering their question, Jesus tells them, "to you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand.'" What are the secrets of the kingdom of God?

The Bible tells us that Jesus is the full revelation of God. Jesus is the Son of God, who lived a perfect and sinless life to offer himself as an atoning sacrifice, not only for our sins, but for the sins of the world. His death and resurrection give hope to all of those who believe in him, that they might receive the gift of eternal life. The secret of the kingdom of God is that Jesus is God, who has come to rescue us from sin. This was the plan of God "for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth" (Ephesians 1:9-10). Let's marvel in that reality!

Jesus then explains these secrets of the kingdom to his disciples, saying that the seed in the parable is the word of God. How we receive his Word is contingent upon the condition of our hearts. Even as professing believers, we must examine our hearts and ensure that it is made of good soil in which God's word is being planted.

How do we cultivate hearts of good soil?



**Look to Christ who is the Great Sower.**

## MARCH 29

The Bible teaches us that we cannot make our own hearts clean. Once dead in our sins and trespasses, we have all rejected God. But it is he, who in his mercy, grace, and love for us, tilled and softened the hardened path, moved the rocks, and weeded the thorny landscapes of sin and brokenness in our lives to plant the seeds of the gospel into our hearts. We can rest assured knowing that Christ is the one who began the good work in us, and it is by his Spirit that this work will come to fruition. (Philippians 1:6)

To faithfully fulfill the commission God has given us, to sow the seeds of the gospel, we must first know our Great Sower and be shaped by his seed. This is where we begin to cultivate a heart made of good soil. As recipients of God's grace and salvation, let us pray as the apostle Paul prays for the church of Ephesus, that we would be strengthened by the Spirit of God and that we would be rooted in the breadth, length, depth, and width of Christ's love, being filled with the fullness of God in the days to come.



MARCH 29

### **PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, I praise you for the good work that you have begun within me. Thank you for rescuing me from my sin. I give you all my worship for who you are and what you have done for me through Jesus Christ. Lord Jesus, give me an attitude of humility and daily dependence on you.*

*Holy Spirit, I need you to refine the soil of my heart so that I may steward the gift of the gospel faithfully and display it to the people around me in my life. Lord, I confess and repent for the ways I have not received your word or do not steward the gospel well. Jesus, help me identify areas of my heart that I need to bring before you, that you might create new, soft, and good soil in my heart.*

### **CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Father, strengthen the good roots of the gospel within this body of believers. Help us to be unified by the gospel alone. Cultivate in us a genuine love for one another. May the reason others come to know the saving grace of Christ be because our hearts are rooted in your Word.*

*Lord, we want to follow the example of our Great Sower. Help us as members of his body, that we would be witnesses to those who have not heard. Cause us to disperse the seeds of the gospel just as Christ modeled for us, generously and indiscriminately.*

MARCH 29

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*God, give us spiritual sensitivity to seek and take opportunities to share the gospel with those who do not yet know Jesus. God, give us eyes to see the people in our lives that need to know Christ.*

*Lord, cause the seeds of your gospel to take root in rich, deep, and good soil. Jesus, strengthen the faith you have sown in our hearts. Help us to be patient, yet expectant, of the promised fruit to come.*

*Lord, cause this fruit and our love for Christ to multiply a hundredfold as we wait for your return.*

DAY 6

M A R C H

30

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JESUS FORGIVES  
A SINFUL WOMAN

Luke 7:36-50

MARCH 30

## LUKE 7:36-50

**36** One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. **37** And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, **38** and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. **39** Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." **40** And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher."

**41** "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. **42** When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" **43** Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly."

MARCH 30

**Luke 7:36-50 (continued)**

**44** Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. **46** You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. **47** Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." **48** And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." **49** Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" **50** And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

MARCH 30

## Devotional Reflection

In this passage we see a contrast between the Pharisee and the sinful woman. One had no idea of his desperate need for what only Jesus can provide, while the other knew that her only need was for Jesus and what he alone is able to give. Jesus said, "Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." This woman who came to see Jesus was fully aware of her sin and need for mercy. This caused her love for Jesus to be great. We see that Jesus is the One who forgives the biggest sinners, people like you and me. He is able to take away our guilt and our shame and give us a new heart and a future.

Jesus knows our thoughts and every intention of our heart. He knew that the Pharisee had no sense of his need to be forgiven without the Pharisee coming right out and saying it. He also knew that the woman's thoughts and intentions had led her to pursue him and the forgiveness that only he could provide. If we are seeing ourselves rightly, we know that we have so much for which we need forgiveness. If we had only committed one sin in our lives, instead of the multitude of sins that we have actually committed, that would be sufficient to condemn us forever. Our hearts should sing when we realize that our sins are many, but the grace that Jesus gives is completely sufficient to take away those sins and replace them with his righteousness.

Do you know today that if you are in Christ Jesus, he has eliminated every one of your sins, now and forever? Do you

## MARCH 30

dwell on your past as if Jesus has no authority over it? Consider the encouragement of Martin Luther who wrote, "Faith connects you so intimately with Christ, that he and you become as if you were one person. As such, you may boldly say: 'I am one with Christ. Therefore, Christ's righteousness, victory, and life are mine.'"

Jesus has accomplished a great exchange:  
all our sins for all of His righteousness.



In the second chapter of 1 John, the apostle writes, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world."

Brothers and sisters, let us rejoice that God the Father sent Jesus, his only begotten Son, to provide the forgiveness that you and I so desperately need! We have not been saved by our own righteousness or good works, and we have not been condemned by our sins or misdeeds. **Jesus has accomplished a great exchange: all our sins for all of His righteousness.** Your faith has saved you; now go in peace.



MARCH 30

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Thank you Lord Jesus for your death on the cross  
which was sufficient to take away every one of my sins  
and solve my greatest problem.*

*Lord, help me to see myself rightly, like the sinful woman, and  
resist the temptation to become self-righteous, like the Pharisee.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, would you help Imago Dei to boldly proclaim the forgiveness  
that is in Christ Jesus when we gather together to worship you.*

*Father, cause each one of our members and visitors to grow in the  
knowledge of Jesus: that he is the one who has exchanged all of  
our sins for all of his righteousness.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Spirit, help us to share the grace that is in Jesus with  
co-workers, loved ones and others who do not know of the  
forgiveness that is available to them.*

*Make us a people who faithfully equip and send from among us  
to take this message to others around the world.*

DAY 7

M A R C H

31

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BEWARE THE LEAVEN  
OF HYPOCRISY

Luke 11:37-12:3

MARCH 31

## LUKE 11:37-12:3

**37** While Jesus was speaking, a Pharisee asked him to dine with him, so he went in and reclined at table. **38** The Pharisee was astonished to see that he did not first wash before dinner. **39** And the Lord said to him, "Now you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness. **40** You fools! Did not he who made the outside make the inside also? **41** But give as alms those things that are within, and behold, everything is clean for you. **42** "But woe to you Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and every herb, and neglect justice and the love of God. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. **43** Woe to you Pharisees! For you love the best seat in the synagogues and greetings in the marketplaces. **44** Woe to you! For you are like unmarked graves, and people walk over them without knowing it."

**45** One of the lawyers answered him, "Teacher, in saying these things you insult us also." **46** And he said, "Woe to you lawyers also! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers. **47** Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers killed. **48** So you are witnesses and you consent to the deeds of your fathers, for they killed them, and you build their tombs.

MARCH 31

**Luke 11:37-12:3 (continued)**

**49** Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute,' **50** so that the blood of all the prophets, shed from the foundation of the world, may be charged against this generation, **51** from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be required of this generation. **52** Woe to you lawyers! For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter yourselves, and you hindered those who were entering."

**53** As he went away from there, the scribes and the Pharisees began to press him hard and to provoke him to speak about many things, **54** lying in wait for him, to catch him in something he might say.

**12:1** In the meantime, when so many thousands of the people had gathered together that they were trampling one another, he began to say to his disciples first, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. **2** Nothing is covered up that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. **3** Therefore whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in private rooms shall be proclaimed on the housetops."

MARCH 31

## Devotional Reflection

In this passage, Jesus draws a line between two groups of people, issuing a distinct message to each.

On one side are the religious elites: the Pharisees and lawyers, who had invited Jesus to dine with them (11:37-54). That must have been one awkward dinner party! He openly accused them of religious hypocrisy and pronounced, "Woe to you all!" – an imprecatory judgment on their system of works-based righteousness. They were blind guides, gatekeeping God's salvation while rejecting it themselves. They pretended to love God because it was politically and socially beneficial to them, but Jesus exposed them as enemies of the Kingdom of God.

On the other side of this dividing line are the true servants of God's Kingdom: the nobodies, the poor in spirit, gathered needily to their Messiah to receive his grace and wisdom (12:1-3). And just as their attitude towards Jesus is humbler and more sincere than the religious elites, so Jesus's attitude towards them is softer and more instructive. Instead of, "Woe!" his message to them is, "Watch out!" He warns them that, like "leaven" (yeast), hypocrisy is infectious; it may begin deep within an individual's heart, seemingly self-contained, but it eventually spreads to influence entire congregations and systems.

This dividing line between the enemies and servants of God's Kingdom wasn't just an observation about the Jewish people in Jesus's day. It stretched all the way back to "the foundation of

## MARCH 31

the world" (11:50) when Cain murdered Abel (Genesis 4:3-10), and it stretches all the way forward to the conclusion of the world when Christ will avenge his martyrs (Revelation 6:9-11). This dividing line exists today. And in recording these conversations, Luke invites us to examine our own hearts in the light of Jesus's teachings here.

**The good news is that God loves to save sincere sinners!** He delights in those willing to admit they need him. Now, it can be an excruciating experience to live so transparently because enemies of God's Kingdom have a habit of crushing anyone who shows weakness. But that's not how God himself operates. David writes, "A broken and a contrite heart, O God, You will not

“ The good news is that God loves to save sincere sinners!

despise" (Psalm 51:17), and Isaiah echoes, "A bruised reed he will not break and a dimly burning wick he will not extinguish" (Isaiah 42:3). God's people, too, ought to "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted,

forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32).

Notice how Luke bookends this passage with two smaller sections on the theme of light and darkness. First, Jesus uses the imagery of light and darkness to impress the importance of confessing secret sin and living transparently before God, self, and others (11:34-36). Then he returns to this imagery later, guaranteeing that God will expose all secret sin one day (12:2-3).

## MARCH 31

The lesson is clear: don't be duplicitous or deceitful like the religious elites. Be honest with yourself, others, and, most importantly, with God. He sees through all our facades and cover-ups. And his true servants are not identified by their religiosity, but by their honesty. 1 John 1:8-9 sums it up well: "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."



MARCH 31

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, thank you for being merciful to me, a sinner.  
I need you every hour. I confess my sins and trust you  
to cleanse me from all unrighteousness.*

*I pray that you would show me the hidden corners of my own  
heart. Search me and know me. Bring to light any secret sins and  
grant me courage to confess them.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*As a church, Lord, preserve us from the leaven of hypocrisy. May  
we be a church that loves what you love – truth in the innermost  
being – and offers no harbor to hypocrisy or deception.*

*Thank you for giving us to one another, for assembling this  
congregation of Spirit-filled family members concerned with each  
other's well-being. Help us to do spiritual good to one another.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Thank you for the gospel opportunities you have laid before us,  
from our next-door neighbors to faraway nations. Grant us  
courage and sincerity as we proclaim your gospel to the lost.*

*Preserve us from missional hypocrisy. We do not want  
to be Pharisees. Help us to be true disciples, and therefore  
make true disciples.*

DAY 8

A P R I L

1

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TEACHING  
HUMBLE SERVICE

Luke 22:24-30

APRIL 1

## LUKE 22:24-30

**24** A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. **25** And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. **26** But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. **27** For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

**28** "You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, **29** and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, **30** that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

APRIL 1

## Devotional Reflection

Imagine reclining at the dinner table with the Son of God, having just enjoyed a Passover meal symbolizing God's imminent atoning work on behalf of his people, and feeling the need to assert your own greatness. It would be quite an inappropriate and shameful conversation. Yet in this passage we read of Jesus's disciples engaged in such an exchange, arguing about which of them is the best (a bewilderingly frequent topic for them). It is certainly not a flattering portrait of Jesus' first followers.

Jesus had just warned that one of them would betray him (v. 21-23). As the disciples questioned which of them could possibly be the betrayer, it seems their dismay quickly spiraled into dissention. They began arguing with one another as to which of them was the greatest, turning Jesus' warning into an occasion for boasting. It would have been spectacular if Jesus had responded to their bragging like this, "Which one of you fed the masses with a child's lunch? Which one of you raised Lazarus from the dead? Which one of you was transfigured on the mountaintop? My friends, you can't even look at an eclipse lest you go blind, and I literally made the sun!" Mic drop.

Such a response would have been accurate, but it also would have meant playing their little game, and that was clearly not Jesus' way. Rather, he uses their squabble as an opportunity to define true greatness. Jesus instructs his disciples not to pursue

## APRIL 1

greatness as the world does, but to serve with humility following his own example.

This passage contributes to our understanding of Jesus' character, and the work he came to accomplish. Jesus had every right to recline at the table and expect to be served, but rather he is the one who serves his disciples. Jesus had every right as the preeminent and pre-existent Son of God (Colossians 1:15-17) to insist that he be revered as such, and yet he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant (Philippians 2:6-7). "For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." (Mark 10:45) Humble service is at the center of Jesus' life and atoning work on the cross.

If the Savior is a humble servant, how could his followers presume to be anything different?



This passage also presents us with the dangers of pride and self-importance. If we pursue greatness as the world does, we will never follow Jesus' example of humility and service. If we want to be truly great, we must choose to consider the needs of others as more important than our own and become servants. Could there be anything more un-Christian than self-aggrandizing pride that refuses to meet the needs of others? **If the Savior is a humble servant, how could his followers presume to be anything different?**

## APRIL 1

One of the most wonderful concepts of this passage is also one of the easiest to ignore. In verses 28-30, Jesus reassures his followers that the greatness they seek will be given to them, but in a far more pure and eternal form than this life can afford. There is no point in demanding greatness from the world when we know the surpassing worth of what awaits us! We can serve and sacrifice for the good of others now, knowing that a day is coming when we will be with Jesus in the final consummation of his Kingdom, and we will eat and drink with him at his table.



APRIL 1

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, help me to pursue a posture of humility and service that reflects your own character and work.*

*Holy Spirit, expose any pride in my heart that may be preventing me from serving others.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, protect Imago Dei from dissention and disunity that comes from pursuing greatness according to the world's standards.*

*Father, cause our community, especially in our growth groups, to be a place where needs are shared and met with eagerness and joy.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Father, give us opportunities to humbly serve non-Christians in our community. Use those opportunities to open avenues for gospel conversations. Give us eyes to see what you are doing and boldness to humbly give the gospel of grace in those conversations.*

*Lord, may you draw unbelievers to yourself as they see the love of Christ on display by the way we love and serve one another.*

DAY 9

A P R I L

2

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LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Luke 6:27-36

APRIL 2

## LUKE 6:27-36

**27** "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic[b] either. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. **31** And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

**32** "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. **35** But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. **36** Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

APRIL 2

## Devotional Reflection

Have you been asked to participate in purchasing a group gift or celebrating an achievement of an unbelieving colleague who is known for talking about you behind your back? Have you found yourself reluctantly resisting the urge to engage in standing up for yourself or others through online debate on some social media platform? Have you ever been involved in a prayer gathering where you were directed to pray for perpetrators of evil or abusers? For each of these situations the natural response would probably be something like choosing to not participate, hitting the send button, or even refusing to pray.

It is interesting to note that the first use of the verb form of love in the Gospel of Luke is found in Luke 6:27a. This particular active love is Agape, which is the highest form of love. It is the reflection of God's love. Who is it that Jesus exhorts believers to love as God loves through deeds, words, and prayers? Enemies.

Christians are called to love their enemies. The command of Jesus in this passage is not directed to some sort of super spiritual person but to all believers. This type of love is unnatural. This type of love requires a heart change. This type of love is not based on feelings or sentimentality. The ability to do good to those who hate you, to bless those who curse you, and to pray for those who abuse you, to turn the other cheek, or to offer your tunic (v. 27b-29) comes from a heart of love and mercy flowing from the very character of our God. The Golden Rule (v. 31) illustrates that since God is merciful and kind even to

## APRIL 2

the ungrateful, his followers should be too. We cannot do this on our own. We need the Lord's help to love as God loves and not as the world does.

Jesus differentiates Agape love by providing examples of worldly love. Worldly love looks like only loving people who love you back. Worldly love does good to others in order to have good done to themselves. Worldly love lends with an expectation of reciprocity. Worldly love is motivated by self (v. 32-34). Agape love, in contrast, involves loving enemies, doing good, lending, and expecting nothing in return.

Those who desire to live for and love like Jesus will be criticized. If you have not received criticism for your faith, consider whether or not your godliness is on display. The church should be marked by radical love, generosity, and mercy because this is the character of God on display.

Remember that God saved us when we were his enemies (Romans 5:10). It is the Gospel that will empower us to love our enemies. Remember that it is the love of Christ that controls and empowers us to faithfully steward the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:11-21). We have been dealt with lovingly through the life and ministry of Jesus. When we walk in obedience by imitating God's care, compassion and mercy even to our enemies, we are demonstrating that we belong to God as sons and daughters.

APRIL 2

**What would it be like if Christians everywhere loved their enemies well?** Who are your enemies (personally, religiously, politically)? How will you love them? May the love and mercy of Christ encourage your hearts afresh in singing, "Once Your enemy, now seated at Your table, Jesus, Thank you."

What would it be like if Christians everywhere loved their enemies well?



### PERSONAL PRAYER

*Heavenly Father, I long to worship you with my whole life. I confess that it is completely unnatural for me to love my enemies. Help me remember that I was once your enemy. God, help me by the power of your Spirit to walk obediently in loving my enemies for the glory of Christ.*

*Faithful Father, help me to trust you more. Give me eyes to see the needs of those around me. Grant me wisdom, compassion, and boldness to do good to those who hate me, to bless those who curse me, and pray for those who abuse me. Make me more like Jesus.*

APRIL 2

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Heavenly Father, pour out your Spirit on Imago Dei Church and fill us to the measure of all the fullness of Christ Jesus that we may be known by our love for one another and for loving our enemies. Make Imago Dei more like Jesus who is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.*

*Holy God, you have set us apart for good works for your glory. Stir up your Bride to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly without expecting anything in return. Grant us grace to faithfully serve as ministers of reconciliation.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Sovereign Father, let the peoples praise you. Let all the peoples praise you! Grant us boldness to proclaim your name and nature through faithful obedience in loving our enemies. Help us share your love in word and deed.*

*God, thank you for sending your Son to become sin for us so that we may become your righteousness. Thank you for inviting us to be a part of your work in bringing many souls to saving knowledge of you.*

DAY 10

A P R I L

3

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DO NOT BE ANXIOUS

Luke 12:4-7, 22-34

APRIL 3

## LUKE 12:4-7, 22-34

**4** "I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. **5** But I will warn you whom to fear: fear him who, after he has killed, has authority to cast into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him! **6** Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? And not one of them is forgotten before God. **7** Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not; you are of more value than many sparrows.

**22** And he said to his disciples, "Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. **23** For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. **24** Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! **25** And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? **26** If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest? **27** Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. **28** But if God so clothes the grass, which is alive in the field today, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith!

APRIL 3

**Luke 12:22-34 (continued)**

**29** And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, nor be worried. **30** For all the nations of the world seek after these things, and your Father knows that you need them. **31** Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be added to you.

**32** "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. **33** Sell your possessions, and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. **34** For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

APRIL 3

## Devotional Reflection

God is our creator. I think most would have no trouble assigning that attribute to him. Yet, he is so much more! God did not simply create man and leave him to his own devices to survive this broken world. No, today's passage clearly reveals a creator that knows his creation intimately and attends to every need so there is no need to be anxious or worried.

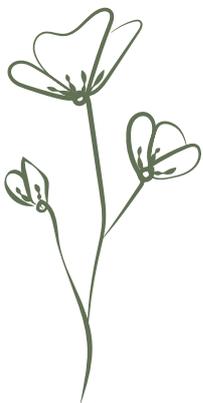
God is calling us to keep our gaze on him for good reason. First, he has all power and authority. Others may hurt us with their words or deeds, but he has power over souls (v. 4-5). Second, he values us, his children. He invites us to look around and see how even the smallest parts of creation are provided for and cared for as reassurance that he will provide for us. As his image bearers, we are more important than any other thing in all of creation (v. 7, 24). Third, he knows everything about us from the number of hairs on our head (v. 7) to our daily needs (v. 30). He delights in providing for us (v. 32). God loves us deeply!

Anxiety and worry creep in when we forget who God is and what he has promised to do. We forget what our response should be as we navigate this fallen world. We focus on the wrong things – what people think about us or do to us. We worry about all the details of life – what we are going to wear, what we are going to eat and drink. Really, anything seems to be fair game for our anxious hearts. We are disposed to forget God's tender care for us in the past. We forget that he is sovereign and that his will cannot be thwarted (Job 42:1).

## APRIL 3

The key to overcoming anxiety, according to this passage, is to gaze on the proper thing. This passage calls us to seek God's Kingdom first (v. 31). How? We do this by listening to God through reading our Bible, where we are reminded of his character and his promises. We do this by talking to God through prayer, handing over to him the things we are worried about. We do this by worshiping him with gratitude and thankfulness as we remember his past faithfulness. And we seek his Kingdom first by seeking to share the love of Jesus with a lost and dying world. Jesus reminds us that all our anxiety is not even sufficient to add one single hour to our lifespan (v. 25-26). Imagine how different life would be if daily we chose to put all the energy expended on worry into doing these things.

One final thought to consider is that when we worry about the things of this life, we are no different than the nations around us (v. 30). We profess to have faith in a loving God who is all-powerful, all-sufficient, and all-knowing. But when our life is consumed with fear and worry, we negate this profession and ultimately hurt our testimony.



The breathtaking beauty of this passage is knowing that the One whose image we bear knew before he formed us that we would struggle with anxiety. He gives us these beautiful instructions to calm us like a mother would calm an anxious child. Let them minister to your heart today.

APRIL 3

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Father, give me faith to believe that you know my needs and it is  
Your good pleasure to provide for me.*

*Father, when I am caught up in the fear of man, remind me of  
Your ultimate power and authority. Help me to gaze intently on  
You.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, let our church be a church that speaks truth to one another  
in anxiety – God is our loving, caring Father who tends to all our  
needs.*

*Lord, let our church be a church that's actions undergird our  
profession of who You are.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Oh God, let my response to anxiety be different from the culture  
because I trust in You, a powerful God, who sees and cares for me.*

*Oh God, help my words that attest to You, a sovereign God, be put  
on display through my actions that would draw people to You.*

DAY II

A P R I L

4

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JESUS HEALS A  
HELPLESS MAN

Luke 8:26-39

APRIL 4

## LUKE 8:26-39

**26** Then they sailed to the country of the Gerasenes,<sup>[c]</sup> which is opposite Galilee. **27** When Jesus<sup>[d]</sup> had stepped out on land, there met him a man from the city who had demons. For a long time he had worn no clothes, and he had not lived in a house but among the tombs. **28** When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell down before him and said with a loud voice, "What have you to do with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, do not torment me." **29** For he had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. (For many a time it had seized him. He was kept under guard and bound with chains and shackles, but he would break the bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.) **30** Jesus then asked him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Legion," for many demons had entered him. **31** And they begged him not to command them to depart into the abyss. **32** Now a large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside, and they begged him to let them enter these. So he gave them permission. **33** Then the demons came out of the man and entered the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and drowned.

APRIL 4

**Luke 8:26-39 (continued)**

**34** When the herdsmen saw what had happened, they fled and told it in the city and in the country. **35** Then people went out to see what had happened, and they came to Jesus and found the man from whom the demons had gone, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid. **36** And those who had seen it told them how the demon-possessed man had been healed. **37** Then all the people of the surrounding country of the Gerasenes asked him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear. So he got into the boat and returned. **38** The man from whom the demons had gone begged that he might be with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, **39** "Return to your home, and declare how much God has done for you." And he went away, proclaiming throughout the whole city how much Jesus had done for him.

APRIL 4

## Devotional Reflection

Even presidents and kings lose their authority and power at some point. Like paper with only a weak magnet to hold it, their authority and power fall the moment they leave their country. But wherever Jesus goes, his authority follows. When Jesus' foot touched the sand at Gerasenes, supernatural powers recognized that the creator of the world stepped out.

Immediately after Jesus disembarks the boat, demons fall into forced submission. Luke describes a lopsided power imbalance between Jesus and the demonic forces. A legion of demons obeyed the one and only Son without a fight. They begged; he commanded. They begged again; he gave them permission. They begged a third time; he cast them away.

Jesus, the Son of the Most High God, wields unquestioned authority over every natural and supernatural power. Storms hush when he speaks, demons bow before him, and death does not question him. The kingdom of God was entering the world, and everything was acknowledging his Lordship. Knowing Jesus starts by recognizing his creation-wide authority and submitting to him.

In fallen people, unrestricted power and authority inevitably lead to corruption. We can't hold power without it consuming us. But Jesus is not like us. Instead of using authority to increase selfish desires, he seeks our good. Luke shares that demons tormented this unnamed man for a long time. But seconds after meeting Jesus, the man is healed. Because of his strength,

## APRIL 4

Jesus can pick up the weak and vulnerable. He shows his power by healing the most broken parts of the world.

Luke's man was wandering in the desert among tombs where demons seized him and men chained him. He walked around naked under the hot sun, ashamed and abandoned. But seeing Jesus reversed the disorder he lived. Jesus freed him from the demonic oppression so that he could now sit peacefully, clothed with dignity, and made whole again. Without the healing power and authority of Jesus, he would have been lost hopelessly in darkness. But because of Jesus' healing power, he found salvation.

There is a difference between knowing the identity of Jesus and experiencing the healing power of Jesus. The demons recognized Jesus. Unlike others in the story, they knew he was the son of God. But they did not know or worship him as their Savior. Only the man, not the demons, could proclaim how God had healed him. Their correct acknowledgment warns us to ask ourselves, "Have we been radically changed by the power of Jesus?"

If you have come to Jesus in faith, then you and this man are more alike than the 2,000-year difference suggests. Jesus has freed you from sin and death, so you no longer wander in darkness. You were an outsider to God's kingdom, but God has adopted you and made you a citizen. He has clothed you with perfect righteousness, given you the peace of salvation, and honored you with "an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled

## APRIL 4

and unfading”(1 Peter 1:4). Jesus has reversed the disorder in your life. You have been made whole.

You don't have to wait for Jesus to step into your neighborhood to be healed. He's ready and willing to forgive and heal everyone who calls out to him today. And experiencing this life-altering healing means responding like the demon-tormented man. Obeying Jesus' command, he went home, proclaiming throughout the whole region how much Jesus had done for him. C. S. Lewis says that we praise and share what we enjoy. It would be frustrating to discover a new author and not be able to tell anyone how good they are. How true is this about what Jesus has done for you? **Worshiping God for his work in your life must include proclaiming that work to others.**

Does your family know how God has saved you? Do your friends know about the peace and hope he has given you? Does your neighbor, barber, grocery-store clerk, coworker, barista, and library-mom friend know how the kingdom of God has made you whole? The idea of evangelism often seems scary. But evangelism is not about having the right answers to every question or being the most convincing speaker.

Worshiping God for his work in your life must include proclaiming that work to others.



Evangelism is sharing the good work that Jesus has done in your life. It's going to others and telling them, "he who is mighty has done great things for me" (Luke 1:49).

APRIL 4

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Father, thank you for forgiving me of all my sins and changing me into a new creation. Thank you for giving me a new family of believers and the promise of eternal life with you.*

*Lord Jesus, I confess those times when my heart challenges your authority because I want control over my life. I repent of wanting my kingdom to rule instead of yours.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*God, make Imago Dei more concerned with how much Jesus has done rather than how much we have accomplished. Make us doers of the word and not hearers only.*

*Lord, we plead with you to heal the members of Imago Dei where cancer, mental disorders, chronic sickness, and many other trials and sufferings exist.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, stir us up to boldly proclaim the name of Jesus so that many will come to know and experience his healing power.*

*Holy Spirit, stir up the hearts and minds of those around us toward a desire to hear the gospel and trust Jesus as their Lord and Savior.*

DAY 12

A P R I L

5

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THE COST OF  
FOLLOWING JESUS

Luke 9:23-27, 57-62

APRIL 5

## LUKE 9:23-27, 57-62

**23** And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. **24** For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it. **25** For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or forfeits himself? **26** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words, of him will the Son of Man be ashamed when he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. **27** But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God."

**57** As they were going along the road, someone said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." **58** And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." **59** To another he said, "Follow me." But he said, "Lord, let me first go and bury my father." **60** And Jesus said to him, "Leave the dead to bury their own dead. But as for you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God." **61** Yet another said, "I will follow you, Lord, but let me first say farewell to those at my home." **62** Jesus said to him, "No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God."

APRIL 5

## Devotional Reflection

As we go about our daily lives we make hundreds of decisions. Some of these decisions are seemingly insignificant and some can change or shape the trajectory of our lives. In Luke 9, Jesus, in two different scenes, addresses counting the cost and following him. This is the most consequential decision we will ever make.

In verses 23 to 27 Jesus describes what the decision to follow him costs and shows how the riches and benefits of following him surpass anything the world could ever offer. Our innate desires tell us that we should live for our own gain. It may come through relationships, positions of authority, financial prosperity or recognition from our peers. Jesus is saying here that these things are not worth gaining if it prevents us from following him. It is important for us to understand that following Jesus does not always equate to loss of worldly possessions, but when we value these things over a relationship with Jesus we are showing we do not understand his surpassing worth.

In Luke 9, verses 57-62, Jesus shifts his description of the cost of following him to more immediate examples. He says that following him may mean giving up even the most basic possessions, such as a place to sleep. And it can also mean a change in familial relationships. We see Jesus give an example of the man who needs to go bury his father and another who needs to say goodbye to his household before he can commit to following Jesus. In this, Jesus is not trying to devalue our

## MARCH 31

basic needs or our most intimate relationships. In fact, we know from other passages that God, the Father, loves to give his children good gifts, and desires to meet our most basic needs. In our day, we are tempted to make an idol of our possessions, our homes, our relationships, and our families. We often fail to realize that the reason we are able to enjoy those things rightly is solely because of Jesus. Following Jesus may cost us a relationship or a promotion which could allow us to live a more comfortable life. But Jesus is showing us here that we are destined for something greater than we can ever gain by our own effort.

We know from Luke 9, that following Jesus will require us to give up certain things in the here and now. But we also know from 2 Corinthians 4:17-18, that any affliction we may experience from the cost of following Jesus, "is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal." We respond to Jesus' instruction on what it means to follow him by understanding that the cost may seem great now, but the surpassing riches of his glory make those costs seem small.

In Philippians 3, Paul reminds us that counting the cost shows us the worth of Christ. He says, "but whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my

## MARCH 31

Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ." This brings us great comfort when we experience loss for the sake of the Kingdom. **Our gain is still yet to be fully realized. This may mean we sacrifice things that make us comfortable, but we must remember that Jesus is worth it.** Thabiti Anyabwile, commenting on Luke 9:57-62, puts it this way, "Security smothers sacrifice. That's tragic when the kingdom of God is at stake. Beloved, we want to have a sacrificial attitude because time is short, hell is real, and souls are at stake." Jesus desires to have you and to use you to bring others to the knowledge that he is worth it, no matter what temporal loss we may experience along the way.



APRIL 5

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, show me areas of my life where I have not considered the cost of following you. Help me to repent and give myself wholly to you.*

*Lord, show me one area of personal sacrifice in my life that I could make today so that someone else might see the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Father, help the collective Imago Dei family to live with single-focused obedience to Jesus.*

*Lord, help us as a church to spur one another on to love and good works, and to reflect on the weight of glory that awaits us in eternity.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Jesus, help us to effectively demonstrate what it means to be a fully committed follower of Jesus, that our walking with him would be attractive to unbelievers in our city.*

*Lord, help those who have not yet trusted Christ to behold the surpassing worth of Jesus and count the cost of following him.*

DAY 13

A P R I L

6

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PASSOVER WITH  
THE DISCIPLES

Luke 22:1-23

APRIL 6

## LUKE 22:1-23

**1** Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. **2** And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

**3** Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. **4** He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. **5** And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. **6** So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

**7** Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. **8** So Jesus[a] sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." **9** They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" **10** 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 that he enters **11** and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' **12** And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." **13** And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

APRIL 6

**Luke 22:1-23 (continued)**

**14** And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. **15** And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. **16** For I tell you I will not eat it<sup>[b]</sup> until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." **17** And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. **18** For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." **19** And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **20** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.<sup>[c]</sup> **21** But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. **22** For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" **23** And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

APRIL 6

## Devotional Reflection

In this passage, we hear about Jesus prophesying about his plans for Passover. How incredible is this! Our Lord and God cared so much about taking this meal with his disciples, that he would providentially plan for and prophesy about even the logistics of this final meal with his disciples. But it is so much greater than that! God planned for Jesus to be the once-for-all sacrifice from the beginning.

We know that in Genesis 3:21, God made the first animal sacrifice to clothe Adam and Eve with skins after they sinned. We see this pattern continued with Abel offering a first-born lamb in Genesis 4. In Genesis 12, God provides a substitutionary sacrifice for his son, Isaac. Later, the Passover is established in Exodus 12, where the blood of a sacrificial lamb was applied to the doorposts to protect the people from the righteous judgment of the death angel in Egypt.

But none of the sacrifices of old could compare to Jesus. He is the first-born, sinless lamb, and the eternal Son of God. He is the eternal One, who was sacrificed for us, and his sacrifice is eternal (Hebrews 10:10). He established the new covenant in his blood, making sacrificial atonement for our sins by the blood of his cross. His body was crushed for us, breaking down the wall of hostility in his flesh, reconciling us to God by opening wide the curtain that separated us from the holy presence of God. We, a sinful and rebellious people, now have access to God through Christ (Hebrews 10:19-22).

## APRIL 6

So, who is this sacrifice for? Why is a bloody sacrifice needed? Just as Adam and Eve were hiding from God after they sinned, we too try to hide ourselves from God because of our sin. He made us for fellowship with him, but how can this be? He is the personification of all that is true and beautiful. He is love, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, the greatest power under control, the establishment of wisdom, the creator of beauty, the artist, the creator of sound and smell, the living God.

How can we, full of brokenness and sin as we are, have fellowship with him? Our sin walls us off from a holy God, the one who is the greatest treasure. We needed atonement for our sin. Our sin needed to be covered by the blood of an atoning

“ the debt we owed because of our treacherous rebellion...has been satisfied

substitutionary sacrifice. We needed the Lamb sacrificed for us; Christ's work for us on the cross, was symbolized here in the Passover meal. His blood was spilt for us. His body was crushed

for us. Slow down, meditate on these wonderful truths. The debt we owed because of our treacherous rebellion against a holy God has been satisfied in and through the work of our Christ on his cross. He purchased us by his own blood. We have been united to him, therefore, he will never cast us out.

Remember, we have been forgiven. "There is, therefore now, no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1).

## APRIL 6

Celebrate what Christ has done for you. If you are in Christ, your sin has been buried with Christ and you have been raised with Christ. He has made you an heir to eternal life. Not only that, but Christ loves us. He has made us his bride. He purchased us at such a cost; let us not take his grace for granted and go on sinning. Remember the warning in Hebrews 10:26, that we would not "go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth." For there is no other sacrifice for us. Jesus' sacrifice is the last one, once for all. There is no other sacrifice required, nor another coming, for his was sufficient.



APRIL 6

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Father, reveal to me things in my life that I desire more than you. Forgive my idolatrous heart and create in me a heart of worship towards you alone.*

*Lord Jesus, thank you for your kindness and steadfast love towards me, even when I have been unfaithful towards you.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, purify your church. Root out any wicked way in us that would obscure a vision of Christ in the eyes of the watching world.*

*Father, help us when we sin, that we would be quick to confess our sin to you and to one another. Help us to live with one another as those who have been covered by the blood of Christ.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, use us to bring our friends, neighbors, colleagues, family, and acquaintances to see Jesus for who He really is.*

*Jesus, you have told us that your kingdom will be fulfilled. Help us to look forward to that Day and pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." (Matt. 6:10)*

DAY 14

A P R I L

7

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A HUMBLE SINNER  
GOES HOME JUSTIFIED

Luke 18:9-14

APRIL 7

## LUKE 18:9-14

**9** He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: **10** “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. **11** The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed[a] thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. **12** I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ **13** But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ **14** I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

APRIL 7

## Devotional Reflection

Have you ever seen a close-up magic trick? One of the secrets to a good magic trick lies in the ability to misdirect—to defy the audience's expectations. The magician sets up a trick, and the audience expects it to work a certain way. But then the unexpected happens. The magician shatters the audience's expectations, and they are astounded. It's performance and misdirection at its finest.

Sometimes we expect things to go a certain way and our expectations get turned on their heads. That is exactly what happens in this parable. Jesus presents his listeners with a scenario: two men going to the temple to pray. One of these men is a religious leader, a Pharisee. He's knowledgeable, respectable, and held in high esteem. The other man is a tax collector—hated and reviled. These men could not be more different. They present a contrast and Jesus' audience would have expected the story to go a certain way: the righteousness of the Pharisee would be praised and the unrighteousness of the tax collector would be condemned. But Jesus subverts his audience's expectations. The Pharisee's prayer is self-promoting—he lives morally, he follows the Law, and he is wrapped up in religious activity. The tax collector's prayer, however, is one of humility and repentance. He recognizes his need for God's mercy and begs for it desperately.

That's when Jesus brings this parable to a head. Jesus provides the result of the men's experience in the temple: the tax

## APRIL 7

collector leaves the temple justified. He is declared right before God. But not the Pharisee. The religious leader, the knower of the Law, the socially respectable one leaves the temple after praying and still stands under God's judgment. Such a statement would have been shocking to Jesus' audience. He commends the tax collector rather than the Pharisee. It was an audacious statement that ran contrary to every expectation his audience would have had.

At the end of the parable, Jesus gives us the reason why the tax collector left justified and the Pharisee did not: The tax collector humbled himself before God while the Pharisee exalted himself to God. The tax collector understood that he could not measure up to God's holiness. He was humbled by his sin, his unrighteousness, and his inability to do anything about it himself. He deserves God's righteous judgment, and he knows it. So he humbly begs for God's mercy. The Pharisee lost sight of his sin and his need for mercy. Instead, he trusted in himself—his position of power and influence, his knowledge of the Law, and his religious activity.

Why does Jesus tell this story? The answer, found in verse 9, is that there were some in his audience who "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt." This was true of his audience and is true of many of us today. Like the Pharisee, we are prone to trust in ourselves. We tend to trust in our morality, how much knowledge we have, our positions of influence or authority, or our religious activity. Often, in the back of our minds, we look at the challenges and

APRIL 7

struggles of our lives through a lens of our own righteousness: "Why would God allow these hardships to happen to me when I have done so much for him?" we ask quietly to ourselves.

But in reality, no amount of moral or religious activity can justify us before God. That is one of the main purposes of Jesus' parable: the Pharisee isn't more righteous than the tax collector because of what he does. The tax collector is more righteous than the Pharisee because of who he trusts. There is a familiar saying: **it's not the quality of our faith, but the object of our faith that holds us.** Jesus is the righteous one who has taken wrath and judgment on himself so that we may be justified. Only God's mercy in Christ can cleanse us from all unrighteousness and declare us right with God.

it's not the quality of our faith, but the  
object of our faith that holds us.

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We are tempted to justify ourselves, but our hope is not in ourselves. Our hope is in the Savior. Like the tax collector, let us see our sin rightly and throw ourselves on the mercy of God. Look to Christ, the one who has secured our righteousness by taking God's judgment in our place. May we not look to ourselves or our works, but to Christ and his work. He has accomplished it all on the cross. Like the magician, Jesus presents us with a great reversal. He defies our expectations by teaching us that humility leads to exaltation. May we be a people marked by humility as we exalt the Savior who died so that we may live.

APRIL 7

### **PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Heavenly Father, keep my heart from self-righteousness, pride and self-exaltation. Give me a humble heart that rests in the person and work of Jesus.*

*Thank you God for your steadfast love and mercy toward me in Christ. May my soul continually rejoice in the good news of the gospel!*

### **CORPORATE PRAYER**

*God, grant Imago Dei Church a spirit of humility. Keep us from pride and arrogance. Shape us into a faith community marked by genuine love, consistent encouragement, and humble service toward one another.*

*Lord, keep the message of the gospel pure and primary within our church. Protect us from false teaching and toward focus on the only object worthy of our worship, Jesus the righteous One.*

### **MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*God, make Imago Dei Church faithful gospel proclaimers who are quick to share the good news of the mercy of Christ! Like the tax collector, let us be a church that points people to God's mercy in Christ.*

*God, make us a joyful church! May we be a people marked by celebration because we have been justified by your grace. Draw people to Christ as a result of our joy in the gospel.*

DAY 15

A P R I L

8

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READY, UNWORTHY  
SERVANTS

Luke 12:35-48, 17:7-10

APRIL 8

## LUKE 12:35-48, 17:7-10

**12:35** "Stay dressed for action[f] and keep your lamps burning, **36** and be like men who are waiting for their master to come home from the wedding feast, so that they may open the door to him at once when he comes and knocks. **37** Blessed are those servants[g] whom the master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them. **38** If he comes in the second watch, or in the third, and finds them awake, blessed are those servants! **39** But know this, that if the master of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he[h] would not have left his house to be broken into. **40** You also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

**41** Peter said, "Lord, are you telling this parable for us or for all?" **42** And the Lord said, "Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom his master will set over his household, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? **43** Blessed is that servant[i] whom his master will find so doing when he comes. **44** Truly, I say to you, he will set him over all his possessions. **45** But if that servant says to himself, 'My master is delayed in coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and get drunk, **46** the master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces and put him with the unfaithful.

APRIL 8

**Luke 12:35-48 (continued), 17:7-10**

**47** And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating.

**48** But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more.

**17:7** "Will any one of you who has a servant[c] plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? **8** Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly,[d] and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'? **9** Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? **10** So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants;[e] we have only done what was our duty.'"

APRIL 8

## Devotional Reflection

In Luke 12, Jesus is describing two scenes of an unexpected appearance: one from a master returning home from a wedding banquet, and the other of a thief breaking into a house. Both situations are teaching about being ready for our King's return, parables which He likens to being "dressed in readiness" and "keeping our lamps lit." Jesus is giving a charge to the faithful to be ready. In fact, as the church, we are to be alert and constantly serving. Those people, according to Jesus, are blessed.

What does being ready for His return look like? The description here implies more action than just waiting; it requires us to be ready. The word "ready" in Greek denotes action, which means to literally "fasten garments with a girdle or belt;" or to "equip oneself with knowledge or the truth." This preparedness Jesus speaks of is relational, and begs to question one thing: do we know him or not? Are we ready to meet him face to face?

The following passage in Luke 17 describes a slave coming in from the field from a day off work, and the emotional posture of the master towards the slave. The master requires the slave to properly dress and prepare a meal and serve the master first, then attend to his own needs. Again, here we see a metaphor of being "dressed in readiness." Jesus is teaching his disciples that in order to be ready, they are to assume a posture of humility. He is teaching them that their duty on this finite earth is to serve

## APRIL 8

rather than to be served. This is important because it gives us insight into how our own posture should be as a church, as we await our Messiah's return.

What we learn from Jesus here is radically against our flesh and calls us to struggle away from our natural desires toward an inclination of obedience. Let us consider three important points: humility, attentiveness, and anticipation. The believer is to live in a posture of humility. In our world that continually asks what could benefit self, self is exalted. Indeed, the war against the idol of self is constantly fought in the believer's heart. In fact, our desire to serve ourselves surfaces so often that we have become desensitized to the concept of serving others. But I say to you, in the kingdom, where does self fit in? Where does self exaltation belong? According to Jesus, it really has no place.

Secondly, we are to live in a posture of attentiveness. Webster defines attentiveness as, "the action of assiduously attending to the comforts or needs of others." What would our church look like if we lived by this principle? What if we prioritized such distinguished care and perseverance towards serving others rather than looking to how we can be served? How vastly different we would look than the world! As ready servants the church is called to practice attentiveness.

Lastly, we are to live in a posture of anticipation. What glory we have waiting for us! We will dwell with the King of the universe, what more do we need? What would our evangelizing look like with this constant state of hope and anticipation of the hope we

APRIL 8

have laid up for us in heaven? What would our countenance look like? Joy would abound in all we do, and, oh, how different from the world we would look! Let us live in a constant state of anticipation, expectantly awaiting who and what is to come, while remaining faithful in our work here and now.

Why would we not give more than we are asked for the Lover of our soul who laid down his life for us?



We serve because we love him. **Why would we not give more than we are asked for the Lover of our soul who laid down his life for us?** I urge you to ponder these things in your own hearts—as you wake up from your own slumber! We wait while serving, we wait with great anticipation while clothing ourselves with humility and attentiveness towards the needs of those around us. Let us be ready servants when our King returns!



APRIL 8

### **PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Abba, you are the Great I Am. Please forgive me for my lack of attentiveness to others around me. Help me to fix my gaze directly on you rather than myself.*

*Help me walk in a manner worthy, bearing much fruit in good works and serving others. Saturate my heart with the truth of your word. Remind me of the eternal inheritance laid up for me in heaven!*

### **CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Father, as your bride we look forward to the great wedding banquet prepared for us to enjoy. Fill us with compassion in caring for the needs of others in the Body by the power of the Spirit that lives in us. Let us look to outdo one another in showing honor.*

*Father, slay any idols of self and entitlement within our Imago Dei family. May we be doers of your word and not hearers only. Ready our minds and hearts for action for your glory.*

### **MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Alpha and Omega, may your glory be declared to the ends of the earth. Give us favor with our unbelieving friends as they see the hope we have laid up for us in heaven.*

*God, may you open doors to new relationships and bring our unbelieving friends to saving faith. Move mightily among our community, drawing the lost to yourself. Fashion opportunities for your word to be proclaimed among the nations.*

DAY 16

A P R I L

9



# THE GREAT BANQUET

Luke 14:15-24

APRIL 9

## LUKE 14:15-24

**15** When one of those who reclined at table with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" **16** But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. **17** And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant[c] to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' **18** But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' **19** And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' **20** And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' **21** So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.' **22** And the servant said, 'Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.' **23** And the master said to the servant, 'Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled. **24** For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.'"

APRIL 9

## Devotional Reflection

Around any major holiday, I am reminded by how much work it is to prepare a nice large dinner party. In Jesus' time, it was not any different and planning a banquet took time. From determining the menu, to setting up the house, to preparing the food, and forming the guest list, the effort and work for the host was extensive. In Luke 14:15-24, we can rejoice that we have a God who has prepared an elaborate banquet and, in addition, he has taken great effort to invite us to join him.

In verse 15, Jesus describes a situation where a host planned to give a banquet and "invited many." The implication is that he took lots of time to prepare it and then sent a servant to personally invite each individual guest. What a host! In that cultural context, a large banquet would have had multiple invitations involved. Therefore, the guests who received this visit from the servant would have known that the dinner party was coming. It wasn't a complete surprise that the banquet was happening. The servant was simply alerting them that it was ready! However, in verse 18, we see that the servant started to hear all kinds of excuses for why these invitees could not come. The invited guests turned down the invitation due to their being preoccupied with wealth (fields), possessions (oxen), and relationships (a new wife). The people that Jesus was teaching this parable to would have found this to be an absurd response by the invitees. How could someone turn down such an honor?

## APRIL 9

In verse 21, Jesus continues to explain that when the invitees declined, the master didn't cancel the banquet or reschedule it. He simply shifted the guest list. He is determined to fill his banquet table. He instructs his servant to bring in the lame, crippled, and blind. Then, when there is still more space, the master tells him to go and invite as many outsiders as he can so that the table is filled.

Friends, while we were outsiders who were lame, blind, crippled, lost, broken, and unwanted, God extended us an incredible invitation. If we are in Christ, we can rejoice because He has prepared a great banquet for us in heaven that was made possible through his Son's work on the cross. The Law and the Prophets gave an extensive heads-up and invitation to the Jewish people, but **there is still space at the table**. So our gracious Father opened up the guest list to include us, the Gentiles. He will not cancel his banquet or stop inviting people, because He is good, kind and generous! We need only accept his invitation. In addition to that, once we accept his invitation, we become his servants who get to pass on the invitation to others. How fantastic is that!

Let's be a people who are different from the invitees of this parable. How devastating it would be to choose to focus on our earthly Kingdom and temporary details of life and to miss out on the great eternal banquet that the Lord has extended to us. We are so undeserving and unworthy of this invitation and yet it has been freely held out to us. Let's accept it and then shout this invitation to others around us so that they don't miss it either!

APRIL 9

**PERSONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, thank you for the invitation that you extended to me when I was an outsider.*

*Lord, I confess there are areas of my life that I tend to elevate and prioritize over your glory and Kingdom. Forgive me for this form of idolatry.*

**CORPORATE PRAYER**

*Lord, thank you for saving us into a Body of believers that will one day gather around the feast in heaven with you.*

*Father, give us eyes as a church that is focused on building the Kingdom to come rather than building a kingdom here on earth.*

**MISSIONAL PRAYER**

*Lord, give us boldness as we proclaim the invitation to Christ's Great Banquet to our lost friends and family.*

*Jesus, we ask that you draw many more to a saving faith in order to join around the great banquet table you are preparing for those who love you. Give us grace to see and boldness to share the hope of the gospel to those around us.*

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We pray that you have been blessed in using this guide, and that together we will look more like Jesus in sharing these 16 days of devoted prayer together.



## RESOURCES

# ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### IDC MONTHLY PRAYER CALENDARS

A daily prayer guide developed for Imago Dei Church members, to pray specifically for our church, missionaries, leaders, and various needs in the world. Links below are for the March and April prayer calendars, respectively.

[MARCH CALENDAR](#)

[APRIL CALENDAR](#)



### STRIVING TOGETHER PODCAST

A podcast to help encourage and equip the Imago Dei Church (Raleigh) family as we follow Jesus together. You'll hear from a variety of voices in the IDC community as we address a range of topics related to the Christian life, theology, culture, and the church.

[LISTEN ON APPLE PODCASTS](#)

[LISTEN ON SPOTIFY](#)



### MORE DISCIPLESHIP RESOURCES

A collection of recommended resources compiled on the Imago Dei Church website for Family and Personal Discipleship, including various books, studies, curriculum content, and accountability questions.

[VIEW WEBSITE](#)