



THE GOSPEL OF
MARK

Lenten Devotional
2025



UNION
CHURCH
佑寧堂

www.unionchurchhk.org

Lent and Easter

at Union Church

PRAYER

- An Evening of Prayer - Wednesday, 7pm - 12 March & 9 April
- Morning Prayer Online - Tuesdays, 7:45am. Get zoom link from admin@unionchurchhk.org
- ONE2025 App - listen to prayers, scripture and devotions - 5 March to 20 April
- Printed version of the ONE2025 devotional available at Union Church

SERVICES

- Ash Wednesday - Pancakes & Worship, 6:30pm supper, 7:30pm worship - 5 March
- Palm Sunday - 8:45, 9:45, 11:15am, 3pm (Tagalog)
- Good Friday Cantata "My Saviour's Love", 3pm - 18 April
- Easter Sunday, 20 April
 - 7am - Sunrise
 - 9:45am - with Brass Quartet
 - 11:15am - Contemporary
 - 3pm - Tagalog(No 8:45 service on Easter.)

BIBLE STUDIES/SERMON SERIES

- Gospel of Mark "Jesus: The Way, Maker, Miracle Worker - 5 March to 20 April

DISCIPLESHIP

- 2:7 Discipleship Series, Sundays, starting 16 March

OUTREACH

- Alpha Course
 - Youth - 6pm, Fridays
 - English - 7pm, Wednesdays
 - Parenting Children Course - 12:30pm, Sundays - 16 March to 13 April
 - Chinese - 7pm, Tuesdays starting 22 April
- Family Missions Trip to Dumaguete, Philippines - 11 to 18 April
- "Messiah" Concert, Hong Kong Chamber Orchestra, 4 - 8pm, Saturday - 12 April
- Concert at Hysan Place - Good Friday Cantata, 5 - 6pm, 18 April
- Kids Easter Fest @22A, 2:30 - 5:30pm, Saturday - 19 April

Looking for ways to connect at Union Church? Let us know! Explore all of our events and activities on our Events webpage. Please register for events.

Need prayer now? WhatsApp Union Church at +852 9182 7247 or email your confidential prayer request to prayer@unionchurchhk.org.

LENTEN

Prayers and Devotions

You are invited to join churches in 32 cities across 6 countries who are listening to or reading the Gospel of Matthew and praying together during Lent and Easter.

This lenten devotional was created by a collaborative effort of unity in the Body of Christ by ONE Asia partner churches.

Union Church thanks Faith Comes by Hearing Asia for their permission to reproduce this content that is found in the ONE Hearing the Word app.

Download the app to listen to the Word of God, devotions and prayers.

Scan the QR code to access all ONE2025 campaign resources.



Opening Prayer:

Loving Heavenly Father, You sent Your Son into the world to rescue us. Thank You that the Gospel is good news for us, because Jesus has come to do for us that which we cannot do for ourselves. Help me today to live with Jesus as my King. In Jesus' name, Amen.

God's long-awaited King

Mark's Gospel is the shortest of Jesus' biographies, and he's incredibly direct. There's no easing into the story. Right at the start he says, "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". Mark packs a lot into that short statement. He tells us straight away that Jesus is the Messiah. In Greek, it's Christos. Christ is not Jesus' surname. That word means an anointed royal figure, the one who would usher in God's rule on earth and rescue His people.

But Mark says even more about Jesus. He calls Him the "Son of God". This is more than a claim that Jesus is an earthly king; this is a claim of divinity. By quoting from Isaiah, Mark tells us that John the Baptist is fulfilling a prophecy about a voice calling out in the desert. If John is the one to prepare "the way for the Lord", the implication is that Jesus is the Lord Himself, God Almighty. In the very first sentence of his biography of Jesus, Mark is not just saying that Jesus is the long-awaited King, he's also saying that Jesus is God himself.

Notice that Mark says that Jesus' identity is good news. So here's a question for you: what's the best news that you'd like to hear today? "You've got the job. You're promoted". They're good news. But the best news is that God has come in person, not just to be with us, but to rescue us.

Intercessory Prayer: The Beginning of ONE 2025 Campaign

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for our city, its churches, its people. As we begin this ONE journey together, join us in unity of spirit and purpose. May our hearts be tuned to Your Word, Your leading and may our lives reflect Your Glory. May the Gospel's power bring salvation to those around us. We pray for cities and nations around the world who are joining our campaign. Thank You for the encouraging response. May we see people from every nation come to worship You. Lord give us a renewed passion for Vision 2033 and seeing the Word of God translated into every language on the planet. We pray for those working on the translation and the work of Faith Comes By Hearing. May Your Kingdom come and Your will be done. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, thank You that Jesus came into the world to bring in Your Kingdom. Thank You that this is the good news of what You have done, not advice about what we need to do. Help me to believe this news and to submit to Jesus as my King. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The “good news”

At the beginning of today's passage, we're told that Jesus proclaimed the “good news”. That word is often translated as “gospel”. In Jesus' time, it wasn't a religious word, but it was an important word. It wasn't just normal daily news, but life-changing news, the type of news that would be sent after military victories, or the ascension of a king to his throne.

It's been famously said that the gospel is good news, not good advice. Do you understand the difference? Advice is information about how to live. If there is a god and an afterlife, then advice is what you need to do to please this god and get into the afterlife. Advice is all about the commands and rules that you need to follow.

But the Gospel is different. It's not advice. It's news of something that has happened. Jesus says this good news is about the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is the rule of God. It's not a place, but when God's reign over His people is acknowledged. It's a world that we long for where there is no more suffering, complete peace and harmony; a world where there is no injustice, where everything is made right. At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was saying, that rule has come. In a broken world like ours, this is the best news we could hear: God has come to deal with our mess.

So how do you respond to this news? Jesus tells us: repent and believe in Him.

Intercessory Prayer: Government

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for Your Sovereignty over all powers and authorities. We pray for all in authority over us, whether in government, the workplace or in our families. As Your church, we lift up all church leaders - pastors, elders and deacons, thanking You for each one. We pray for Your protection over them and their families. May You give them Your Godly wisdom and discernment, love and justice to guide their decisions, so that whatever they decide is according to Your will & wisdom. May we, as Your servants, have receptive hearts to obey all goals and imperatives, remembering that it is You we serve as Master and Lord. In every area of our lives, help us to glorify You in our treatment of those under our care. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, thank You that You are the great physician and healer of our souls. Thank You for showing us in Jesus' earthly ministry, the healing and wholeness that we will enjoy in full when He returns. Strengthen and guide us that we would live for Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Healing and teaching

Today's passage gives us a glimpse of Jesus' healing ministry. We're told that after Jesus healed Simon's mother-in-law, "the whole city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many who were sick with various diseases". Just imagine what that would look like today. Ambulances would begin to ferry people from hospitals to the house where Jesus was staying. There would be a queue of people with debilitating conditions entering the house; and a procession of people leaving the house healthy and joyful. Within hours, the news would spread, there'd be incredible coverage on social media, everyone would be talking about Jesus.

But just as Jesus' ministry begins to get a huge following, He says to Simon, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out". Does this mean that Jesus came just to preach and not to heal? No, Jesus' ministry of healing and preaching are connected. Jesus' miracles show His authority. He is the one who comes with God's power. Later on, the reason why Jesus cures the paralysed man is so that people would know Jesus has authority to forgive sins. The miraculous healing authenticates the preached word.

If you're often burdened by the brokenness of our world, be encouraged by this passage. Jesus' ministry of healing in Capernaum was a preview of what the Kingdom of God will be like when He returns. We see in a limited glimpse what we will experience in full: no more sickness and death, complete healing and restoration, beauty and perfection when Jesus comes again.

Intercessory Prayer: Family and friends

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for blessing us with friends and family, to teach us to love You better. We all form part of Your Body, and need each other as we do You. As Your faithful witnesses, help us be honest and true brothers and sisters, always ready to encourage and uplift those in need of our care. To those feeling alienated and lost, help us bring Your peace & acceptance. We pray Your heart for those who don't yet know You as Lord and Savior. Give us courage to share the hope we have with them. May Your love compel us to reach out to those suffering in the midst of difficulty and challenging times. Give us wisdom to discern their need, whether physical, mental-emotional, and / or spiritual and apply Your healing balm. Where there is relational hurt and "brokenness", we pray for forgiveness, healing and reconciliation. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Lord God, thank You that Jesus came to deal with my deepest problem, the problem of my sinful heart. Thank You that He went to the cross so that I can be forgiven. In this everchanging life! Help me to find my deepest joy and purpose in Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

The wonderful offer

Put yourself in the situation of the paralyzed man. He's heard about Jesus' power to heal. He's been lowered into that room by his friends hoping to be healed. Yet, Jesus doesn't immediately heal him. Instead, He says, "Son, your sins are forgiven". Do you think the paralyzed man would have been pleased with Jesus? Maybe he would have thought, "Jesus, you don't understand. I have a leg problem. Don't worry about my soul. Can you deal with my legs as well as souls?"

Jesus could have replied by saying, "I know about your suffering. I'm going to get to that.

But you need to realize that people's deepest problem in life has nothing to do with their physical situation. It's got to do with their heart situation. It's got to do with your sin."

What do you think your biggest problem is right now? Is it a difficult situation at work, or a broken relationship, or a health problem with a loved one? If you were lying on that mat, Jesus would say the same thing to you. Maybe He'd go further and say, "If I deal with your physical situation and that's all I do, wait a little while, maybe a few months, that sense of exhilaration won't last. There will be something else that makes you discontent. I have come to give you lasting joy. I've come to bring you forgiveness and eternal life with God." Is this an offer from Jesus that you've accepted? Is it the gift that gives you the most joy and shapes your life?

Intercessory Prayer: Those in despair, isolation and emotional struggles

Dear Heavenly Father, many times these past few years, we've felt lonely, discouraged and even depressed as a result of the accumulation of stressors in our relationships, society and the world around us. This has left many of us fearful, and incapable of meaningful, loving relationships. Rather than turning to You, in isolation many have turned against one another, creating divisions. In desperation, they have been left grappling for temporary solutions that are self-seeking, often false, addictive and even destructive.

We pray for healing and restoration, for renewed strength and resolve to work together to rebuild trust, show care and kindness. For this, we need Your abiding presence and constant love with us to help us, especially so we may overcome all forms of darkness and discouragement, and together in unity come to rely on You alone as our only source of hope and comfort. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love.
Where there is offense, let me bring pardon.
Where there is discord, let me bring union.
Where there is error, let me bring truth.
Where there is doubt, let me bring faith.
Where there is despair, let me bring hope.
Where there is darkness, let me bring Your Light.
Where there is sadness, let me bring joy.*

*O Master, let me not seek as much
to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love,
for it is in giving that one receives,
it is in self-forgetting that one finds,
it is in pardoning that one is pardoned,
and it is in dying that one is raised to eternal life.
Amen.*

(Prayer of St Francis of Assisi)

Opening Prayer:

Loving God and Heavenly Father, we are often blind to our own spiritual needs. We fool ourselves into thinking we are spiritually self-sufficient, that we can earn Your favour through our morality and goodness. Help us to see our need for Jesus, to know Him more clearly, to follow up more faithfully, and to love Him more deeply. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Jesus, our soul-physician

Throughout the first half of his Gospel, Mark is answering the question, "Who is Jesus?". In today's passage, we see that Jesus calls Levi the tax collector to follow Him, and then He has dinner at Levi's house. The Pharisees ask, "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?". Indeed, throughout His ministry, Jesus will continually associate with the social and spiritual outcasts of society.

Jesus answers the Pharisees question by saying, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." When Jesus says He is not coming for the "righteous", He does not mean that some people don't need Him. What He does mean is that He comes for those people who recognise their need for Him. Jesus compares Himself to a doctor. You go to the doctor when you have a health problem that you cannot deal with yourself. You go to the doctor not just for a diagnosis, but for treatment.

When Jesus calls people "righteous" in this passage, He's using that word in the same way as people who won't go to the doctor because they think they can heal themselves. They think they can make themselves right with God by being good and moral. They think they are righteous and don't need a soul-physician. However, the reality is that they don't recognise their deep spiritual need.

How about you? Do you recognise your deep spiritual need? Jesus has come to call sinners: those who know they are spiritually and morally unable to save themselves.

Intercessory Prayer: Overcoming of Personal Temptations

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for help during times when we are tempted, and when we fall into sin. Let us rely on Your power to rescue, remembering that though You, too, were tempted, You remained sinless, and have promised that with every temptation You'll provide a way of escape. Only as we completely rely on You, will the enemy have no recourse, but to flee. Oh Master, forgive us for trusting in gods of our own making, and for our foolish pride in thinking we can withstand the devil's tactics on our own. Be our refuge, our shield and fortress. Protect us from the attacks of the enemy and deliver us from all evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory, For Ever and Ever, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Loving God, Jesus came preaching peace to those who were far off and to those who were near. We pray that wherever we stand with You today, You will draw near to us. Open our eyes to the truth of who Jesus is, and soften our hearts to receive Him. In the name of Christ, Amen.

Better Evidence or Better Hearts?

Late in life, the great agnostic philosopher and Nobel prize winning mathematician Bertrand Russell granted an interview to an American journalist on the topic of religion. The journalist famously ended the interview with this question: “Let us suppose, sir, that after you have left this sorry vale, you actually found yourself in heaven, standing before the Throne. There, in all His glory, sat the Lord (...) God. What would you think?”

“I would think I was dreaming.” “But suppose you realized you were not? Suppose that there, before your very eyes, beyond a shadow of a doubt, was God. What would you say?” (Russell) wrinkled his nose. “I probably would ask, ‘Sir, why did you not give me better evidence?’ “

Like Russell, many people think that belief in Christ would be easier if they were given a bit more evidence. But today’s passage shows us that a lack of evidence is never the problem – unbelief is a problem of the human heart.

Mark 3:1-6 records an occasion when Jesus performed a miracle in the sight of many religious people. They had heard enough about Jesus to watch Him, but only so that they could accuse Him. They had studied the evidence of the scriptures enough to answer Him, but they kept silent rather than agree with Him. They witnessed the evidence of His healing miracle, but it only made them plot to destroy Him. Today let us ask God not for better evidence, but for better hearts.

Intercessory Prayer: Pastors and Ministry Leaders

Lord Jesus, forgive us. We forget that pastors are human, too. We confess our severe lack of appreciation for them, our unreasonable expectations of them, and our utter failure to pray for them. We repent. In Your mercy, change us. Use us as Your Aarons and Hurs to hold up their battle-weary arms. Surround them with trusted confidants for honest conversations and counsel. Visit them in their lonely and insecure moments. Refresh them in their dry seasons. Rejuvenate them in times of ministry fatigue. Heal them when they face relational setbacks at home and in the church. Draw them into deeper experiences with You. Strengthen them as they bear the burden of shepherding us and disciplining us for the work of the ministry. Deliver them from over-reliance on credentials or giftedness, proven track record or novel ideas. Anoint them in their preaching to invoke faith, instill hope, and inspire love for You, for the Church, and for the lost. Favour their ministries with Your manifest presence and power to reverse the trend of casual, consumeristic Christianity. In Jesus’ Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Most merciful Father, Your servant Paul says, "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." Please help us to fully accept that truth and to readily receive His forgiveness. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Can I be forgiven?

In today's passage, Jesus points out the serious danger of wilful blindness. People had seen Jesus doing wonderful works by the power of the Holy Spirit, but rather than attribute them to God, they attributed them to Satan. This is what Jesus calls blasphemy against the Holy Spirit in verse 29. It is the conscious, deliberate and persistent attributing of a clearly recognised work of God to the influence and activity of Satan. It is motivated by a sincere and intentional hatred of God. It will not be forgiven because it is the deliberate rejection of the only means of God's forgiveness.

If you are worried that you have committed blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, that is a good sign that you haven't. Those who take such a stance toward God are no longer worried about the judgement to come. Sorrow over sin, and a desire for forgiveness is a sign that forgiveness is still on offer to you. If that is you, notice again what Jesus graciously says to you: "Truly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the children of man, and whatever blasphemies they utter," (Mark 3:28).

What about cursing using God's name? Every sin can be forgiven. What about stealing from your employer? Every sin can be forgiven. What about cheating on your spouse? Every sin can be forgiven. What about abandoning your family? Every sin can be forgiven. What about murder? Every sin can be forgiven.

For those who are with Jesus, rather than against Him, there is nothing you have done and nothing you will do that can put you beyond the forgiveness of God.

Intercessory Prayer: Unity and First Love in Church

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving us despite our wrongs and failures. We are ashamed of our wishy-washy relationship with You. Our hearts are divided. Our souls are deluded. Our minds are distracted. We have strayed. We confess we no longer love You as we did at first. We repent. Forgive us. Today, we choose to serve You and love You above all else. More than ever, we need Your grace and mercy. Deepen our hunger and thirst for You. Fire up our faith to live for You. Unite our hearts to fear Your Name. In this new beginning, we want to glorify You by being the relational community You expected us to be: To love one another as You have loved us. To forgive and reconcile. To keep no record of wrongs. To think the best of others. To speak well of others. To esteem all others better than ourselves. To listen deeply to one another. To agree to disagree respectfully. To outdo one another in showing honour. To make every effort to preserve the unity of the Spirit — regardless of gender, generation, race, nationality, education profile, economic status, or social standing. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Almighty God, You have ordained that the gospel of Jesus Christ should be preached to every living creature, even to the ends of the earth. Please give us ears to hear it and hearts to receive it, so that Your Word will bear fruit in our lives. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

The seed that sifts

During Jesus' earthly ministry, people responded to Him in very different ways. Some left everything to follow Him. Others plotted to kill Him. The same is true today. How should we understand such widely varying responses to the person and work of Jesus. Today's passage explains.

First, notice that the way that the Kingdom grows is by the widespread broadcast of the Gospel. In the parable of the sower, the sower does what no poor subsistence farmer would ever do, for he scatters seeds far and wide with little concern for where they land! But according to Jesus, that is precisely how His Kingdom grows. It is as the verbal message of the Gospel is broadcast far and wide that God produces a crop.

Second, notice that the way a person responds to the Gospel message reveals the state of their heart. All four of the soils may appear perfectly fine until they are exposed to the seed. A person's life might look great from the outside, but when they hear the word of God, they are exposed for what they really are – some hard-hearted, some shallow, some distracted, but others receptive. The word of God reveals the truth about us.

Third, notice that even the way Jesus teaches is meant to sift and sort us. According to Mark 4:10-12, Jesus intentionally used parables to both reveal and conceal truths. Will we hear His strange stories and arrogantly dismiss Him, or will we lean in and humbly seek deeper understanding?

Intercessory Prayer: Parents

Dear Heavenly Father, the Bible says: from You every family in heaven and on earth is named. We come before You to ask for mercy and forgiveness for every parent; some know Your name while others do not. They are deceived by the prince of the power of the air, following their own desires and leading their families astray. Father God, we seek Your grace and blessings upon them. May the Holy Spirit touch the hearts of these parents, guiding them back to You. Fill those who are poor in spirit, mourning and merciful with Your spiritual wisdom and strength, so they can build a loving and harmonious family that truly loves each other. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Faithful God, please give us ears to hear the truths of Your Word and eyes to see the beauty of Your saving plan for the world, revealed by the Lord Jesus. In whose name we pray, Amen.

Insignificant beginnings

In verses 26-32, Jesus tells two parables with a similar point – The Kingdom of God starts with a seemingly insignificant little seed, but over time it becomes powerfully pervasive.

In 1807, Robert Morrison, a 25 year old Scottish presbyterian minister, stepped off of a ship in Guangzhou. He spent the rest of his life working as a missionary in Guangdong and Macao, returning to England on furlough only once. By the time he died in 1834, he had translated the entire bible into Chinese and he had baptised 10 Chinese converts, despite the fact that conversion to Christianity was outlawed at the time. An entire lifetime of labour for 10 illegal converts and a book in an empire of millions upon millions of people. Completely insignificant and invisible. Perhaps his friends and family back home thought it was a waste, but out of that mustard seed the tree started to grow. Using his Bible and building on his work, other Protestant Missionaries came. More Chinese were converted and house churches sprung up across China. Through the persecutions of the 20th century they only increased, until today by very conservative estimates there are upwards of 80 million protestant Christians in the mainland.

And as you look across the world that has been the pattern everywhere! In the last century, Christianity has grown at twice the rate of population growth across the continent of Asia. In that 100 years Christians grew from less than 10% of Africa's population to about 50% today. Wherever the true Gospel is being faithfully preached, God is producing an astonishing harvest.

Intercessory Prayer: Children, Including the Forgotten: Orphans and the Abused

Our Heavenly Father, we praise You for Your loving kindness in adopting us as Your children, into Your big spiritual family across the globe and the ages. What a privilege we have in calling You Abba Father! We know that all children are precious in Your eyes, but we recognize that orphans have a special place in Your heart Lord. We pray for Your provision and protection over children who have been abandoned or abused, who are vulnerable and often taken advantage of. Thank You for reminding us that caring for the marginalized, including orphaned and abused children, is evidence of our genuine faith. We pray that these precious children would find comfort and trustworthy love in a relationship with You and call You their Abba Father, even as they're missing love from their earthly parents. Lord, help us to have compassion on orphans and abused children, and use us as Your Church to be Your hands and feet that minister to these children with Christ's love. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Everlasting God, You have ordained and constituted the ministries of angels and mortals in a wonderful order. Grant that, as Your holy angels always serve You in heaven, they may, at Your command, help and defend us on earth through Jesus Christ Your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with You, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Devils fear and fly

Our reading today shows us two great truths that we need to hear and accept. First, demonic powers are real and they aim at the degradation, depravity and destruction of human beings. The scriptures assert the reality of supernatural evil. Jesus frequently spoke of it and confronted it in His earthly ministry. If our modern secular worldview makes us embarrassed about this fact, we simply need to re-examine the evidence in verses 1-20. Demonic power always leads to the degradation of human dignity (he was living like a brute beast), it leads to depraved acts (living among tombs and cutting himself) and it ultimately leads to the destruction of human life.

But the second great truth in today's reading is this - Jesus has complete authority over demonic powers and is able to deliver his people. Consider the posture of the demons, falling at Jesus' feet in verse 6. Hear the pleading of the demons, begging Jesus for mercy in verses 7 and 12.

It isn't even a competition. Jesus has complete authority over spiritual evil. And whatever havoc demons are allowed to wreak, they do so only by His permission. The demonic powers may do only what Jesus permits, until Satan and all his demons are on the last day finally cast into the abyss - that is to say hell - for all eternity. All the forces of darkness tremble before the name of Jesus. And because that's true, if we entrust ourselves to Jesus, we do not need to live in fear of spiritual evil. Christians are under His protection.

Intercessory Prayer: Adoption/Foster Agencies and Families

Dear Heavenly Father, You watch over the needs of orphans and the homeless. We specifically pray for adoption and foster families, as well as organizations dedicated to serving children. Please grant these families and institutions the patience, understanding, love, and strength necessary to provide warmth and security as they nurture and care for the children. May these children flourish within the loving embrace and find hope and sense of belonging. Father, let every child experience Your unconditional love and presence. Dear Lord, guide us to collaborate in creating a community filled with love, ensuring that all children can look forward to a brighter future. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

*Our Father who art in Heaven,
Hallowed be Thy Name.
Thy Kingdom come.
Thy Will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
Amen!*

(The Lord's Prayer)

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I confess that much of my life is driven by fear more than faith. I think I can control my future, my health, my finances, my relationships. Help me to see that You truly are Lord, and I am not. You are God and I am not. Help me also to surrender and trust You. In Your glorious and powerful name, I pray, Amen!

The Lord of Life and Death

Mark wants us to discover who exactly Jesus is. He has just shown us that He is Lord of creation (4:35-41) and Lord over demons (5:1-20). Mark shows us that Jesus is Lord over disease and death as well. Both of these women find themselves in an utterly hopeless situation with no ability to do anything to help themselves. No amount of money has been able to heal the first, and no doctors have been able to save the second. They both know what it means to come to the end of themselves and their own efforts to save, heal or deliver themselves.

Jesus loves coming into the worst and most broken parts of our lives, bringing His healing and redeeming touch; revealing to us that He truly is Lord. Jesus shows us that there is nowhere in our lives which is beyond His power and ability to save, not even death – our greatest enemy – is beyond His redeeming touch. There is one thing however that is necessary: unwavering faith (v34, 36). Believing that Jesus really is who He said He is; and responding with submission and trust is all that He asks us of.

Intercessory Prayer: The Homeless

Our Heavenly Father, we thank You that You provide most of us with a home that we always go back to, and for that, we're grateful. Help us not to take it for granted, as there are many people in the world that do not have a physical home to call their own, for various reasons, often beyond their own control. We're reminded that our homes are of temporary nature, that as believers, Heaven is our ultimate and eternal home. At the same time, we see Your heart for the marginalised, and want to uphold all those who are homeless in prayer. We pray for Your protection over the homeless from the elements, from people who would harm them for no good reason, from social stigma or low self-esteem, from ill health, and from hunger. We pray that despite times of restlessness or transiency that they might go through, the homeless would find emotional and spiritual restedness that can only be found in a relationship with You Lord. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, help me to follow You wholeheartedly through the suffering and the hardship. I confess that I often seek comfort and convenience above faithfulness and worship. Forgive me, and change me. As I follow You, help me to become more like You, I pray. In Your gracious and faithful name. Amen!

Familiarity and Followership

Have you ever been left out, overlooked or outright rejected? Maybe for a work opportunity, a family gathering, or a social engagement. It is always hard to accept rejection, as we feel that we are being treated less honourably than we deserve.

Although Jesus is the Lord of Glory and the true King of heaven & earth, amazingly He experienced incredible rejection from people who did not understand Him. If they had, they would not have rejected Him. But Jesus wasn't bothered by the response He got from people. He knew what His mission and purpose was. He had come to die on the cross for the sins of the world. Rejection was part of God's master plan for Him to overcome sin, death and satan.

It was those who were most familiar with Jesus, those from His own hometown, who took Him most for granted. How much does our own familiarity with Jesus blind us to His Glory? How much do we overlook Him?

Jesus then shows His disciples that following Him means that our lives will look much like His. Disciples are those who follow Jesus closely, live like Jesus and become like Jesus. His disciples would also cast out demons and anoint those who are sick with oil (v13); but they must also be prepared to experience the same rejection He did (v11). People would not love the message of the Gospel. For Jesus, it was suffering first then glory later; for all those who would follow Him, it is exactly the same; suffering now, glory later.

Intercessory Prayer: Those Struggling with Financial Hardship

Our Father in Heaven, we see Your people coming to You in desperation. Some are struck with financial hardship beyond their ability to cope. Some feel overwhelmed beyond words, haunted by a fear of the future. Forgive those whose financial woes are due to their own folly such as pride and presumption, unethical decisions, reckless squanderings. May we all humble ourselves and repent. Have mercy, O Lord. As Your children seek solace in Your presence. Lord, redeem us for the wealth the enemy has stolen from us, or that we have lost through mismanagement, poor investments, sins or wrong habits. Help us, oh Lord!

Teach us Your ways. Grant us insight and foresight. Grant us wisdom from above to resolve the complicated financial issues we are grappling with. We cast our cares on You. Our trust is in You alone. This we call to mind and therefore we have hope: Your steadfast love never ceases. Your tender compassions never fail. Great is Your faithfulness. We believe You are working behind the scenes, orchestrating miraculous solutions beyond our wildest imagination. Thank You for the immeasurably more You have in store for us. In Jesus' Name. Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I want to know You more profoundly, deeply and wonderfully than I currently do. I am often constrained by fear, doubt and insecurity. I make foolish choices to impress people rather than living for You and Your Glory. Help me to love, trust and obey You wholeheartedly. In Your strong and eternal name, I pray, Amen!

Foolish Fear and Courageous Faith

If someone were to read an account of your life 100 years from now, what would they think of the kind of person you were? What would they say about you and the life you lived? In today's passage, we are given an opportunity to look at two people's lives and to assess what kind of people they were.

King Herod is someone who has it all together; the money, the power to spare a life or to take it away, the social connections, the honour that comes with royal titles; he had reached the top. John the Baptist on the other hand is languishing in prison, with none of the enviable things that Herod has.

John however has one thing going for him: He knows who Jesus is, while Herod does not (v14-16). And because John knows Jesus, he is willing to speak truth to power and to suffer for Him.

Do we know Jesus? Does knowing who Jesus is, really impact the way that we live our lives? Or do we keep our Christian faith hidden out of sight, not letting it cause trouble to us? Jesus calls His followers to not just acknowledge Him, but to wholeheartedly live for Him, even when that is dangerous.

King Herod seemed to have it all; and yet today we laugh and scoff at his insecurity, fear and foolishness. John seemed to have nothing yet today we honour him for his courage, faith and confidence in Jesus. Only Jesus can do that for us. Let's follow Him.

Intercessory Prayer: The Elderly, Widows, and Widowers

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray especially for the elderly, widows, and widowers, as You instruct us in the Bible to look after them. May the Lord's loving care always be with them, providing comfort and strength. In their moments of loneliness, wrap them in Your love, so that they can feel warm and supported.

May the Lord grant them peace of mind, body and soul, and may they always experience hope and happiness. May their material and financial needs be met, so much so that they do not lack or worry.

Please also grant strength to the family and friends who care for their loved ones. May they experience joy and fulfillment in their caregiving roles. Let our community unite to support these cherished individuals, ensuring that every elderly person, widow, and widower feels the warmth of being appreciated and loved. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I confess my dislike of being put in impossible situations, where my faith is tested; where my confidence and limitations are revealed. I like to appear to have things together. Help me to trust You; knowing that only You can save and deliver me. I trust You; help me to trust You even more. In Your trustworthy and wise name, I pray, Amen!

Mission Impossible

Have you ever felt Jesus asking you to do something which is beyond your capabilities or your strength? Jesus loves to put us in such situations; where we come face to face with our finitude and realize that we don't have what it takes.

In today's passage, and the one that follows, Jesus puts His disciples in two difficult situations: He asks them to find food for 5,000 people (v37), and then He 'makes them' get into a boat at night, knowing that a storm is coming their way (v45-48). Jesus sovereignly arranges the circumstances of our lives such that we are brought to our knees, recognizing that Jesus alone is able to do what we cannot do on our own.

1,300 years before Jesus, God's people were facing an equally impossible situation; being slaves to a tyrant in Egypt. God's people were in real trouble, but God sent a deliverer in the form of Moses who would rescue them and set them free from bondage, slavery and death.

Mark wants us to see that Jesus is the true and better Moses; the great deliverer who will rescue His people from bondage, slavery and death. Just as Moses fed God's people with manna in the wilderness, Jesus feeds us with the true bread of life. Just as Moses led God's people through the sea, so Jesus will lead those who trust in Him through raging waters to safety.

Jesus allows His disciples to face two impossible situations in which only He can rescue them. Will we allow Him to rescue us? He will, if we will turn to Him and trust Him.

Intercessory Prayer: Peace, Conflicts and Wars Around the World

Dear Heavenly Father, as the Lord Jesus has taught us, we would hear about wars and uprisings, nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, be not terrified: for these things must happen first. Father God, who cares for orphans and widows, we ask for Your mercy in these times. We pray for the Holy Spirit to inspire international organizations to provide support to war victims. Father God, we implore You to send Your angelic hosts to protect infants and children in the battlefield. We ask that You raise up influential political leaders and grant them the wisdom to negotiate with peace and effectiveness. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I confess that I do not see You for who You truly are. My vision of You is blurry. Open the eyes of my heart to see You more clearly, to know You more deeply, to trust You wholeheartedly and to love You above all else. In Your sovereign and Holy Name, I pray, Amen!

Misunderstanding Jesus

Have you ever found yourself in a conversation with someone you do not recognize, but knowing you probably should. Maybe you're trying to remember what this person's name is, where you met before, or who introduced you ?

In today's passage we again have two groups of people who don't quite recognize who Jesus is. The disciples don't recognize Him at all, mistaking Him for a ghost (v49), even though they have spent a good deal of time with Him and should know by now that He is Lord over creation (4:35-41). When Jesus and the disciples get to Bethsaida the crowd recognize Him (v54), but even still they don't truly see Jesus for who He is. Mark is fascinated with the 'crowds'; he is constantly telling us how the crowds were fascinated with Jesus; gathering around Him, longing for Him, seeking Him out. By the end of Mark's Gospel, we'll see what the crowds think of Jesus: they cry out 'crucify him' (15:13).

In today's passage the crowds see Jesus as a miracle worker, a healer, someone who will improve their lot in life and take away their temporary suffering. They recognized Him as being Jesus of Galilee, but they did not recognize Him fully. They did not see Him as Savior King, the promised Messiah King, the son of David, the true King of heaven & earth. What about us? Do we recognize Jesus for who He truly is? Will Jesus pass us by (6:48)? Or will we recognize Him and bow down in worship and adoration?

Intercessory Prayer: Schools and Teachers

Dear God almighty, we want to uphold schools and teachers in all nations for they are special. They both become very vital for our nations, society and communities now and forever. God, we pray a special touch of Your flow through all teachers as we respect and honor their time, effort and hard work put in to teach the students. Lord let the dear teachers teach with full commitment, heart and soul put in to see their people going on to next level in life, let teachers be a true living example and carry testimonies that can impact the students. Lord, we believe that the teachers are sent by You, God, we pray that the passionate teachers will lead the non-passionate teachers too. Lord, we pray that the schools will all start to have good Christian fellowships, students and teachers will come to hear Your word through prayer and scripture reading hence find the love of Christ. God almighty, we pray that the students and teachers will surely become salt and light in the place. You have placed them for a purpose. Lord God, we thank You for schools and teachers. We ask in Jesus' name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, we know that Jesus dislikes those who are pretentious and inconsistent. Lord, may You teach and guide us not to be treacherous, pretentious, but be truthful and mean what we say. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

Do Not Be Pretentious and Be Consistent

The religious leaders confronted Jesus. Among His disciples, there are those who do not abide by the tradition to wash their hands, pots, and copper vessels before eating. These traditions relating to cleanliness and hygiene are mostly not instructions from God, and will only cause one to bear unnecessary burden. Hence, Jesus sets things right by criticising and teaching them.

Jesus criticised them:

1. Being hypocritical: outwardly seems to be godly but inwardly is corrupt and far away from God. This is what God dislikes the most.
2. Viewing the instructions of men as the truth. This form of worship is a waste of time and displeasing to God.
3. Holding to the tradition of men, but rejecting the commandment of God. They pretend to be good men, but evade their moral responsibility and do not support their parents.

Jesus taught them:

1. The key point is not the exterior filth of a person, as this can be washed off.
2. The key point is the defilement from within, because that is evil. Inner defilement will gradually take shape and transform into actions.

Dear friends, do you have any form of hypocrisy? Has Jesus reminded you about any change that you should make? We must be cautious and determined to cleanse our inner being, so that we remain consistent. Just as Proverbs 4:23-24 states: "Keep your heart with all vigilance, for from it flow the springs of life. Put away from you crooked speech, and put devious talk far from you."

Intercessory Prayer: Those with Special Needs

Dear heavenly Father, our hearts go to parents and homes with special needs in all the nations. Lord they are Your children and Your people, You have placed them in places for a reason and You know it all. God, we pray for a special touch of Yours over them. We know it is not easy to handle these people, young or elderly. Release Your powerful anointing over the parents and the guardians so that they get the courage, wisdom and strength from above to handle these lovely people.

Lord, we pray that the caregivers and inclusive ministry leaders will release Your joy, peace, love and loads of patience. God, we pray that they will pray, worship God and read the Word of God to these people. Lord, let the love of Christ and healing touch flow through these wonderful people and we believe changes will take place and healing will come through. We know nothing is impossible in Your name, Jesus.

God, we believe with all our hearts that this will come to pass. Let Your name alone be lifted higher and magnified. We pray in Jesus' mighty name, amen.

*Christ behind and before me,
Christ behind and above me,
Christ with me and in me,
Christ around and about me,
Christ on my right and on my left,
Christ when I lie down at night,
Christ when I rise in the morning,
Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,
Christ in the mouth of everyone that speaks of me,
Christ in every eye that sees me,
Christ in every ear that hears me.*

- St. Patrick

(Prayer of Protection)

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, we often take Your compassion for granted. This is wrong. We know that You have compassion for men, but at the same time, may You teach us to ask for Your help with a humble heart. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

Seek the Lord's Compassion with An Unworthy Heart

Jesus addressed a Gentile woman who sought help from Him as a dog. Why is He so crude? The reason is, the good news reaches the Jews first, before the Gentiles! What is puzzling, Jesus had earlier, in Gerasenes, used the hefty price of two thousand pigs to save a demon-possessed Gentile. This meant that Jesus has other reasons for using "dog" to describe Gentiles. Where is Jesus? In Tyre. Tyre and the Jews have a feud (Ezekiel 26:3), and Tyre at that time is another affluent Gentile city, where the rich often oppress the poor. This woman is from a rich family, and yet came unsolicited to harass Jesus. No wonder Jesus has such a response. Why did this woman come to find Jesus? Because her daughter has been demon-possessed and she is unable to resolve this issue despite being rich. Upon hearing Jesus' response, she did not argue with Him as she is aware of the background relating to her people group. Hence, she said, "Yes." She was not angry, she did not leave, but humbled herself. Perhaps this was the first time that this people group is so humble to a Jew, putting oneself down and admitted to be a dog and was unworthy. She even said that "even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs." This should be the attitude when we come before God, aware that we are unworthy, pleading with Jesus unceasingly, hence Jesus drove out the demon from the daughter. Today, let us learn from this woman, be humble, let go of oneself, admit that you are unworthy and pray to the Lord!

Intercessory Prayer: Marriages and Pre-Marriages

Dear Heavenly Father, we lift up every marriage and premarital relationship in prayer. Marriage is a divine institution, and we ask that husbands love their wives as they love themselves, while wives respect their husbands, supporting and nurturing one another throughout their lives. We also pray for brothers and sisters who are in relationships but have not yet planned to marry. May they patiently await Your timing and prepare themselves to become lifelong companions. For those who are still single, we ask that You help them cling to the teachings of truth while they wait, encouraging them to seek guidance from their pastors in times of difficulty. We pray for the church to foster more connections and opportunities for service, creating a platform where single Christians of the appropriate age can interact with the opposite sex. This way, they may experience Your guidance and unwavering love with their beloved ones. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, many people feel that You do not care for them. We know this is not true. You are not just an all-powerful God, but One who is considerate. May God teach us to better understand and experience You. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

The Hard-to-Guess God

These scriptures have many teachable areas: 1. It is surprising to see the great desire that the crowd has for Jesus. They have been with Him for three days and not been home. One could see how important is Jesus to them. 2. All rounded care: Jesus cares for us holistically, supplying our spiritual and physical needs. The scriptures mentioned that Jesus has compassion on them, that is so considerate of Him! 3. Jesus has never been concerned about a lack of resources. He can overcome material limitations to provide for the needs of men. 4. God loves to co-labour with us. He gathers the seven loaves and a few small fish from the crowd. He multiplied these foods in His hands and fed the thousands. Jesus has also invited the disciples to serve together, He asked them to pass the loaves and fishes personally to many. To the disciples, this must be an unforgettable testimony of grace. 5. With merely seven loaves and a few small fish, they fed four thousand people. Four thousand is only the number of the men; it could be more than ten thousand people including the women and children. The provision of God will not only be just enough, but in abundance, in the end there is still seven baskets full. Is Jesus precious in your heart? Have you experienced the supernatural provision of God? Have you experienced the supernatural works of God in your serving?

Intercessory Prayer: Singles

Dear Heavenly Father, we lift up our single brothers and sisters in prayer. Please bless them with peace and joy during this stage of their lives, ensuring they find satisfaction and repose. May they deepen their reliance on You each day and feel Your love and guidance. Lord, help them to remain free from anxiety or disappointment as they await their future partner, trusting in Your wonderful plans. Grant them wisdom and discernment, and prepare a partner after Your heart in Your perfect timing. May they focus on You, filling their hearts with joy, whether they are single or married, and lead lives that are meaningful and glorify Your name. We trust that You will meet all their needs in Your way and at the right time, for You are the leader and guardian of their lives. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, a lot of people do things in a messy manner, but You do things and teach us in a systematic way, step by step. May You teach us and help us understand the way You do things, and to know how to make our plans. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

Systematic Planning

These scriptures have two interesting areas: 1. Jesus took the blind man out of the village before healing him. After restoring his sight, he forbids him from entering the village. Why so? Jesus has other plans, that is to leave the village and set off to another place to teach the disciples. If this blind man were to enter the village, and the villagers knew that he has regained his sight, they will surely flock to Jesus and He will not be able to leave at all. Jesus plans the things He does, besides responding to the needs of men, He allocates His time, and is clear about when to do and what to do. 2. The first time Jesus lays His hands it is “unsuccessful”, the blind man can only see blurred scenery. Jesus must lay His hands for a second time before the blind man can see everything clearly. Why so? Jesus made a blunder as He is tired? The blind man lacks faith? Maybe not, and the Scriptures do not explain! The fact that the blind man only restores his sight after the second time is a demonstration by Jesus to teach the disciples by His actions. Jesus is bringing out a phenomenon, even though the disciples and other people have “seen” Jesus performing many miracles, they still “have not seen” and “do not understand”. To understand the meaning and truth behind the actions, they must gain the clarity and understanding in a step-by-step manner, without haste! May we also be patient as we eagerly learn about the truth.

How have the Scriptures inspired you today? How do you make your plans? How do you learn about the truths in a systematic manner?

Intercessory Prayer: Teenagers

Dear Heavenly Father, we come to You with our prayers for our youth. Please safeguard their hearts and minds during this challenging and tempting time. Grant them spiritual wisdom to discern right from wrong, and good from evil, so they may resist the trends of the world and walk steadfastly in Your path. We ask for the courage to uphold their faith against peer pressure and not be tempted to stray from the Truth. Please protect their affections and relationships, providing them with wisdom and boundaries as they form friendships, and encouraging them to pursue a life of purity and holiness. May they humbly obey You and shine brightly as children of light, illuminating this generation. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Father God, to us, "Who is Jesus?" is a determining question. It affects our choice to live out a life of Satan or as children of God. May God teach us not to be mistaken and live our life in vain. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen!

Do Not Be Mistaken About Who Jesus Is

Jesus asked the disciples a seemingly simple, yet a very core question: "Who do people say that I am?" He has performed many miracles and taught many truths before He asked this question, so what do the people understand about Him? The answers from the marketplace confirmed that Jesus is unique, for example, He is the incarnation of a certain great prophet. But this is not in its entirety.

What are the views of the disciples who are close to Jesus? Peter's answer: "You are the Christ" seems perfect, yet deep down, he is also wrong. Because when Jesus predicts that He will suffer and be killed, Peter took Him aside and rebuked Him not to do so. Peter's actions led Jesus to sternly reproach him as Satan publicly. What is happening here? In the eyes of Peter, Christ represents power, miracles, the Savior for his people, the One who has given him fame and fortune. Peter is not aware, nor does he want Jesus to have any other greater mission, that is to be a sacrifice, to suffer, to be killed, to not just save a single people group but the entire world. Peter wants to stop Jesus from suffering or be killed due to his own selfish desires. He wants to build his own sphere of influence. In the later days, the disciples would even argue with another about who is the greatest (Mark 9:33). Jesus tells Peter pointedly: "For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Jesus reminds the disciples not to stand in the way of God because of their personal agenda. To obstruct the plans of God is akin to Satan, because only Satan will hamper the work of God. Jesus tells the disciples, there is a price to pay for coming after Him, one must deny himself and take up his cross! Are you obstructing the work of God? Jesus has sacrificed His life for us, what price are you willing to pay for God?

Intercessory Prayer: Pre-Schools, Kindergartens, and Elementary Schools

Dear Heavenly Father, we thank You for providing child care centers, kindergartens, and primary schools as places for children to grow, learn, and explore the world. Please guide the management of educational institutions and give them wisdom to make the right decisions, to offer safe, healthy and warm environment for our children's development, and to bless communities and families, bearing witness to Your grace. We also ask that You grant wisdom, patience and love to the teaching staff so that they can reflect Your love and concern for the children in their daily teaching and care. Please guard the health and safety of our children and give them joy and peace. May they grow into children with wisdom, love and courage through learning and playing, learn to share and cooperate with others, and develop good character. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, I do believe, but my faith is small. May the Holy Spirit come fill me, so that through prayer I may build a deeper relationship with You, to be empowered to serve You more, love You more, and to break free from the snares of this unbelieving generation, for the glory of Your name. Amen.

Power through prayer

When Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John and went up on the mountain to pray, the three disciples saw Jesus' appearance changed, and they heard a voice came out of the cloud saying, "This is my beloved Son; listen to him," which clearly showed that Jesus was the Christ.

When the four had come down from the mountain, a great crowd was troubled about a demon-possessed child, for they had not been able to heal him. Jesus said to the father, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes," and he commanded the evil spirit to come out of the child.

Why couldn't the disciples command the evil spirit to come out of the child? For although the disciples believed that Jesus was the Christ, they did not abide in God through faith and did not know how to increase their faith through prayer. When we pray, our faith will increase, and we will be able to live out the way of life every day by practicing the truth of the Bible through the power of prayer. Amen.

Intercessory Prayer: Tertiary Educational Institutions

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for all international and local universities and colleges. Thank You for giving students these educational opportunities to pursue knowledge and cultivate their minds. Please give wisdom and guidance to help students to have clear goals in their studies and to trust in Your leading in the face of challenges. Lord, please give professors and scholars the wisdom and love to be role models for their students, to enlighten their thoughts and values. Please also protect the management and give them the wisdom to make decisions that are in line with justice and truth, so as to provide students with a safe and equitable learning environment. No matter where students come from, please help them find Your truth in their academic pursuits, establish a positive outlook on life, and become a blessing and light to society. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, let me not be too rich, that I shall be too proud and then disown You; and let me not be too poor, for that will take me away from You. Let me live in love, according to the Grace You have given me, I ask in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Heavenly Father cares for you

Many people thought that Jesus Christ was going to lead the Israelites to rebuild the kingdom of David. Therefore, His disciples argued who would be the greatest when Jesus was glorified. On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus predicted for the second time that he would suffer, in order to correct the disciples' false thinking.

Jesus also used a child to show the disciples they should not seek glory and riches, but to be like a child, expecting only a cup of cold water. Such a little one will be protected by God, and if anyone attacks him, God will judge them, such as throwing them into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck.

People are all chasing after money and fame, thinking those are the answers to honor and security, but that is wrong. Jesus pointed out that only by having a covenant with God, can we enter the Kingdom of God and will not perish. What are we pursuing today?

Intercessory Prayer: Foreign Workers

Dear Heavenly Father, what a joy to seek Your face again and we believe You give Your ears to our cry. God, we want to uphold our dear foreign workers in our nations. We thank You, for You have sent them over here for a purpose and we also feel their hearts as they have left their loved ones to make a living abroad. Lord, this is not an easy move, we pray they get good employers and good colleagues to work with. God, we pray as Your children go about daily chores, let it be some Christians will minister to them and they will feel the touch of the living God, Christ Love to flow into these people like never before. Let these people know that they are loved always. They will connect to a church and grow every day in Your Words. They will be salt and light and live a testimonial life for their friends and families. Thank You for Your beautiful love, God. We pray and ask in Jesus' mighty name, Amen!

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

*You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

(Prayer of Psalm 23)

Opening Prayer:

Loving Heavenly Father, thank You for choosing me to be a disciple. Please teach me to follow You in this crooked and perverse generation. By the revelation of the Holy Spirit, may I not be swayed by this world and wander away, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

Unite with God

The Pharisees tempted Jesus, by asking “Could a man divorce his wife by giving her a certificate of divorce?” Jesus pointed out that this is not just a moral and ethical matter. The Bible says that God joined man and woman together to become one flesh, and that they should not separate, so as to reflect the unity between men and God.

People want to divorce their wives because their hearts harden and they do not want to obey God, instead they want to worship other gods, such as worshipping Mammon which represents money, or power etc. So when the disciples rebuked those who asked Jesus to bless the little children, Jesus was indignant with his disciples, because anyone who receives the Kingdom of God must simply trust the Heavenly Father like a child, or he will have no part in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Only when we become like little children, following the teaching of their parents and do accordingly, can we enjoy goodness in life? Likewise, only when one lives in constant relationship with Heavenly Father, can one enjoy the Kingdom of Heaven, but if that relationship is damaged, then one cannot receive the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Intercessory Prayer: The Rich-Poor Gap

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray to You with our concerns about the inequality between the rich and the poor in our world. Lord, You are the Almighty Provider, and Your grace knows no bounds, Yet, we witness many people enduring poverty while others possess great wealth. Please show mercy to those living in hardship, providing for their needs and instilling in them strength and hope. We also pray for those who have resources; may You inspire them to give generously and assist those in need. We ask that our society and nation develop fair policies to bridge the gap between wealth and poverty, ensuring that everyone enjoys dignity and equal opportunities. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, let me hold on to the truth that nothing and no one is more important than You in my life, or else I could lose my way in this crooked and perverse generation, and even sin against You. May I humbly follow You, in the name of Jesus, Amen.

How to enter the Kingdom of God?

A rich man came to Jesus and asked Him how he could enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus' answer made him go away sad. Jesus told His disciples that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the Kingdom of God. Actually, Jesus' point is not that the rich cannot do so, but that people are ignorant to think that they can rely on money to enter the Kingdom of God. Jesus was addressing the fallacy that all problems can be solved with money.

Some people value their family and properties more than Jesus and His blessing, which is essentially the same as valuing money more than Jesus, and will prevent people from entering the Kingdom of God. Following that, Jesus predicted suffering in Jerusalem for the third time, which also illustrated this truth. What do we see as our top priority in life today? Is it the Lord Jesus and the Gospel that we deem as very important, or other people or things, such as money?

Intercessory Prayer: Epidemics, Plagues and Diseases

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for all nations to protect families facing epidemics, plagues, and diseases. May hearts be turned to believe and trust in Your faithfulness and shelter as You have promised in Psalms 91:6 that they will not need to fear the pestilence nor plagues when they take refuge under Your wings. We also pray for Your mighty healing upon those who are affected by sicknesses and diseases that they turn to You and learn to trust in You to bring divine healing for them. May these signs of Your imminent return turn hearts towards You as the answer to their prayers and the source of help. May Your children learn to receive from You Your divine love that removes fear from their hearts so that they can remain steadfast and firm during these trials in order to be the light and bring faith, hope and love to those who are afraid or suffering. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, open my eyes as I may understand Your love. Humble my heart that I may walk in accordance with Your Word, to glorify You with my limited self. May my heart cling unto You and understand Your will better, so that I may live out the power of the Gospel, Amen.

Who can see the glory of Jesus?

A blind man can see the glory of God because he has faith in Jesus, but a disciple who follows Jesus can only see the glory of sitting around Him. The key is not to have eyes to see, but to have faith in Jesus, to believe that He can give grace and salvation.

In order to point out the disciple's blind spot, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve," so that they would seek true glory. This gap in perception is an actual explanation of the events that Jesus would encounter during the week after he entered Jerusalem. It was in His humblest moment that He was most glorified. Who can see the glory of Jesus? What glory shall we seek after today?

Intercessory Prayer: Prisoners and Their Families

Dear Father, we pray for the people serving sentences or being detained in correctional institutes. You know their hearts and the heartaches they face being separated from family and loved ones. May You remind them that You are there to comfort them and love them as their heavenly Father. You will never leave them nor forsake them. May they come to know You in their time of imprisonment and experience healing for their brokenness and true freedom from the issues that have kept them bondage in their hearts. May they gain a deeper appreciation of Your love and mercy through Your death on the cross for them. May You restore to them their identity as they follow You make them into a new creation to live a life of blessing to others. We also pray for the families of prisoners as they experience changes due to the incarceration of their loved ones. We pray for Your provision for them financially, emotionally and spiritually to support children or elderly parents of those incarcerated. May they have the strength to sustain and care for themselves and those who are suddenly left in their care. May the children of inmates be blessed and equipped to prosper and succeed. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your only son, Jesus, who reigns with gentleness, humility, righteousness and mercy. We pray for Your help in shaping us and let us be the beautiful witnesses for You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

The Coming King

As Jesus approached Jerusalem, He instructed two disciples to find a colt that had never been ridden, for Him to enter the city. Bethphage is only 1.6 kilometers from Jerusalem, and people typically travelled over there on foot, but Jesus chose to ride a colt to fulfill the prophecy of Zechariah, "Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey...he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth." (Zechariah 9:9-10).

While kings would enter a city in glory on horses or chariots, Jesus chose a colt to demonstrate that He reigned with justice, mercy, humility and peace.

As Jesus' followers, what manner of life do we choose to live on earth?

Intercessory Prayer: Those of Other Faiths or No Faith

Dear Father, we pray for the awakening of the spirit of those who are of other faiths. We pray for an inquisitive heart that they would want to seek the truth and question what they may have believed as children or because their culture demands it. We also pray for their hearts to seek answers when they face trials and natural disasters and call upon Jesus. May You reveal Yourself to them through dreams and visions and demonstrate in tangible ways that You are the true and living God. May they feel the unfulfillment in their hearts until they find You, who truly fulfills their hearts' desires and satisfies their souls. We pray for those who have no faith that You would put questions in their hearts about the meaning of life and life after death. May You awaken their soul to realize that there is a spiritual world and that there is more to life than what they see. May You bring believers into their paths to demonstrate Your life and love; and direct them towards You. May they come across various media which point them to You and revive their souls. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, we come humbly before You, asking the Holy Spirit to shine through us, to help us acknowledge our sins and identify our weaknesses, and to teach us to obey You. May we live out a genuine faith in our lives. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Genuine faith

After entering Jerusalem as the Prince of peace, Jesus prepared to suffer and to complete the redemption on the Cross. Through cursing the fig tree and cleansing the temple, Jesus pointed out the spiritual failure of the religious leaders of that time. They had an incapable religious facade, taking up the roles of teaching and management in the temple, yet they failed to acknowledge Jesus' authority and even sought to assassinate Him. They lacked a genuine faith life.

Genuine faith is recognizing Jesus as Lord, submitting to God, and believing in Him without doubt. Such individuals establish a close relationship with God, live in harmony with others, and forgive one another.

As we acknowledge Jesus as Lord, are we willing to let God govern every aspect of our lives and live out a genuine faith?

Intercessory Prayer: Those Suffering from Physical illnesses, Including Cancer and Dementia

Dear Father, we pray for Your divine healing upon those suffering from illnesses. You are Jehovah Rapha there is nothing beyond Your healing power as You are our creator and know our bodies so well there is nothing impossible for You. We believe in Your divine hand especially in healing even those with long term illnesses including cancer and dementia. We pray for revelation if there's any spiritual connections to the illnesses that by Your power and might that these would be broken off and healing would come in the physical. We also pray for wisdom for those who are in the health profession to have Your divine guidance in how to treat these illnesses and provide the most appropriate and effective treatment. We pray for those who are going through suffering that they would draw near to You Jesus and You would take this suffering upon Yourself as You did on the cross in order that those affected could be set free. May You carry them in Your arms and speak words of comfort to them. May they know Your goodness and mercy that is always following them as they trust in You. In Jesus' name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, people often rely their sense of security in ownership of all kinds, such as wealth, reputation, talents etc. Yet, when we realize that everything we have is a gift from You, our hearts are filled with gratitude. We ask for Your guidance to use our resources to glorify Your name. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Nothing Is Not Given by God

In this parable, the owner of the vineyard represented our Heavenly Father, while the tenants symbolized the religious leaders of Jerusalem. The tenants were entrusted by the owner to manage the vineyard, yet they sought to seize the owner's property for their own glory.

Through this parable, God highlighted the issues with the religious leaders. He granted them spiritual authority to teach the truth and bless the community, but they betrayed God's intentions and trust, refusing to submit to His authority and desiring to rule for themselves. Jesus warned them that all actions taken on earth will ultimately face God's judgment.

In the responsibilities entrusted to us by God, do we serve with a heart of gratitude, striving to be faithful and good stewards?

Intercessory Prayer: Suicide Prevention, Emotional Struggles and Mental Illness

Dear Father, we pray for Your divine intervention drawing those with emotional struggles and mental illnesses to be near You in their darkest days. We pray for Your angelic help to reach people when they are at their lowest point and save them from suicidal attempts and self harm. Reveal Yourself to them that You are their hope, that there is nothing that You cannot help or turn around. May You show them Your love that will never leave nor forsake them despite what situation they are facing or how they are feeling. May You penetrate to the deepest depths of their hearts and show them Your love to revive their hope. May they know that You are a Father who understands what they are going through and that in Jesus, they can receive all the comfort that they need and the faithful and steadfast support to help them get through. We pray for more believers working in the mental health field to provide divine wisdom and counseling to support and empower people to overcome their struggles and live lives of victory. May You show those struggling that they can live a life of freedom in You from these illnesses. In Jesus' name, Amen!

*Jabez called on the God of Israel.
‘If you truly bless me,’ he said,
‘you will extend my lands, your hand will be with me,
you will keep harm away and my distress will cease.’
God granted him what he had asked.*

—1 Chronicles 4:10

(Prayer of Jabez)

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, in this knowledge-driven society filled with countless information, we often find ourselves trapped in confusion. We ask for Your help to cultivate a heart of reverence, so we may receive true wisdom from You. May we invest our lives in Your Kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

The Greatest Responsibility

During His time, Jesus faced rejection from various groups, including the Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees.

In His dialogue with the Pharisees and Herodians, Jesus addressed the sensitive issue of paying taxes to the Roman government, which involved national, ethnic and religious conflict. Jesus answered wisely: since the coin bears Caesar's image, paying taxes is a duty of the people; however, humans are made in God's image, so they must commit themselves to God (Mark 12:17).

The Sadducees tried to test Jesus with questions about resurrection which was not in their belief. Jesus pointed out that God is not the God of the dead but of the living (Mark 12:27).

Ultimately, in His conversation with the scribes, Jesus summarized this debate by stating that the greatest responsibility in life is to love God and to love others.

In a world overflowing with information, how can we discern and respond so that we walk in God's will throughout our lives?

Intercessory Prayer: Evangelistic Opportunities

Our beloved Abba Father, Lord Jesus Christ who loves us, and the Holy Spirit whom we love, thank You Father for sending Your Only Son Jesus to be nailed to the cross for our sins. Thank You Jesus for the precious blood You shed for the world. Thank You for the stripes You took for our healing and the punishment You suffered to bring us peace. Because Jesus You are risen from the dead, You are Lord Jesus Christ who gives us eternal lives. There is no salvation apart from You. May the Holy Spirit fill us every day to preach Your great love, Lord, and to lead people to You. We give thanks and pray in the exalted name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, every time when I remember the cross of Jesus Christ, where He sacrificed Himself to redeem us, His love inspires us to learn to love in return. Please help us to pour out our lives in response to Your love. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen!

True Godliness

Jesus quoted the Psalm, "The Lord said to my Lord" (Psalm 110:1). Here, the first "Lord" refers to Yahweh, and the second "Lord" refers to Jesus, indicating that David called Jesus "Lord". Although Jesus is a descendant of David, being called "Lord" by David illustrates that Jesus existed before humanity was created. Now, having taken on flesh, Jesus taught in the temple to make it known that He is Lord.

Jesus also used the example of a poor widow's offering to teach the crowd about devotedness. Godliness is not based on outward actions but on the innermost being. The object of godliness is the "Lord." The widow's offering was relatively meager, yet she was praised for responding to God's love with her love, demonstrating that godliness comes from her love towards God, regardless of the amount given.

Let us reflect on our motivations when we participate in church gatherings, engage in service, and make various offerings. Are we serving the Lord devoutly?

Intercessory Prayer: Personal and Church Evangelistic Outreach in Our Communities

Dear Heavenly Father, we pray for ourselves. Thank You for teaching us the meaning of humility and devotion through Mark 12:35-44. We pray for personal and church Gospel outreach, and ask that You give us wisdom and courage to humbly preach Your salvation in love. May we not pursue superficial glory, but, like the widow, be willing to give ourselves completely and rely entirely on Your grace. Please teach us so that we can bear witness to the Lord in our actions, so that the truth we preach can bring those who hear it to repentance and to willingly turn to You. May the church become the light and the salt of the world, and bring out heavenly influence. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, we look to You today with praise in our hearts and on our lips. We are grateful for Your reassurance and sure promises in uncertain times. Help us to count on You instead of counting days. Where our hearts and thoughts are troubled by overwhelming events around us, we ask You to help us by Your indwelling Holy Spirit to return again and again to the sure foundation of Your Word, our shelter in a time of storm. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Don't Be Alarmed

Jesus replies to the disciples' troubled questions—when will these things happen and what is THE sign? They want certainty—how human! Jesus answers, but as usual, not in the way His disciples expect. While they are concerned about times, He is concerned about their spiritual well-being in and through dire days.

It is easy, isn't it, to unthinkingly give our attention to the unsettling events of these days which quite often feel like the last days Jesus describes. Even now, our news feeds are flooded with false claims, geo-political conflicts, religious persecution. So, let me ask you: Is your heart troubled? Worried about what happens next? Jesus makes it decisively clear that our thoughts should not go in that direction.

Consider His confident commands shining through dark days: "Don't be alarmed. Be on your guard. Don't worry. You will be hated because of me but endure and be delivered." His powerful words quiet our anxious thoughts. After all, they are spoken by the One who has healed, delivered, calmed storms, raised the dead, and fed thousands as we have read through Mark's action-packed Gospel picture of Jesus the Way Maker and Miracle Worker.

Yes, we have good reason to stay alert and be aware. Jesus is not advocating complacency. But surely, we have far better reason to dwell on His encouragements that strengthen us through difficult days—whether these are indeed the last days, or they are yet ahead. Don't be alarmed.

Intercessory Prayer: Christians in Workplace

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise You, and lift Your name on high. Thank You for giving us the ability to work. Thank You for letting us serve You through work in our workplace. We pray for blessings, wisdom, and strength upon all Christians in the workplace. May You give us vision while we work, so may we glorify Your name in our workplace.

Lord, may You raise us up to be light and salt, to share the Gospel, and bring Godly impact in our workplace. May You bless our relationships with our bosses and colleagues, so others will see You, Jesus through us. May You guide us to set others an example by doing what is good, and demonstrate Godly integrity. May You give us a faithful heart, so we would be faithful in little things, and faithful in large ones. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Lord, we don't know when You're returning, but we have Your promise that Your words will never pass away, and so we pray and say we believe You. As we wait and work and look for Your return, we want to obey You by keeping alert and ready for You. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen!

Be On Guard

In the preceding verses, Jesus has reassurances for His followers in the last days. But He also has a specific command, a warning, for the end times. Simply, be on guard or be alert.

The signs and events that announce His eventual coming again in great power and glory seem specific and unmistakable. Nevertheless, be on guard. At the same time Jesus declares that no one knows the day or the hour except the Father. Our response? Be on guard.

While sincere people may sincerely disagree concerning the end times which Jesus describes, what we can and should agree on is Jesus' insistent and repeated command—be watchful or alert or on guard.

The Greek phrase means simply watch or keep awake. Think of the very next occasion in Mark's Gospel when Jesus repeatedly urges his followers to watch and keep awake. It is in the Garden of Gethsemane as Jesus urges Peter, James, and John to keep watch with Him. As Jesus agonizes in prayer, the three drift off to sleep even after He returns and entreats them again to be watchful, aware of the temptation that is ahead. We know all too well the sad results of their failing to be watchful.

Jesus ends His last days teaching with a parable that speaks to us about doing the work He has given us to do in His authority, all the while being watchful for the master's return. While we see signs pointing to His return, we don't know when. What we do know is— we must be on guard!

Intercessory Prayer: The Police, Hospitals, and Fire Services

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise You, for You're our strength, our shield, our help, our deliver, our rock. Thank You for giving us well established police, hospitals, and fire services in our city. Thank You Lord for protecting and helping us through these dedicated public servants, in times of troubles and disasters.

May You bless them and protect them, while they serve the general public. May You grant them with love, wisdom, peace, and strength, so they may be able to set Godly effective strategies. May You also raise up prayer groups, and prayer altars in their workplace, so Your name will be lifted up among these service sectors, and transformation will begin. And, may You raise up the righteous to share Your love and Gospel to the patients, people who encounter difficulties and challenges. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Oh Lord, as I come to You in prayer today, I confess that I sometimes come to You reluctantly and even thoughtlessly. I don't always value You and worship You as You deserve, but I don't want to be like that. I want to have a heart of abundant and abandoned worship. May I please Your heart. May I do beautiful things for You. In Jesus' name, Amen!

What is Jesus Worth?

What a striking display of extremes is vividly revealed in these few verses! At the heart of this interaction is a silent woman, offering Jesus the purest worship and adoration in her extravagant gift of fragrant and costly oil poured out on His head. Framing her worship are the plotting Jewish leaders and Judas offering himself as their willing accomplice to betray Jesus into their hands. She gladly pours out almost a year's wages worth on Jesus, not knowing she is anointing His body for burial. Judas, on the other hand, greedily accepts the promise of a mere 30 pieces of silver for his treachery, knowing full well he will deliver Jesus into the hands of those who hate Him.

As the onlookers, most certainly including Judas, decry her lavish gift as wasteful and better spent on something practical for the poor, Jesus Himself comes to her defense—she has done a good, valuable, and beautiful thing for me. Though she did not know of His impending death, she certainly knew the worth of her Lord and freely expressed her heart for all to see.

This passage may stir questions to your own heart as it does to mine—what is Jesus worth to me? How do I value Him? Oh, certainly Jesus is worth more than a few pieces of silver, but is He worth my unmeasured worship and adoration?

In this Lent season of reflection may we be found in attitude and action with the woman who worshiped the Lord Jesus with all her being and valued Him at great worth.

Intercessory Prayer: Those Trapped in Sex Industry and Human Trafficking

Dear Jesus, we praise You. You're the Light of the world. We pray for those who are trapped in sex industry and human trafficking, that they will encounter You in times of distress. May they hear Your voice and find hope, comfort, and rescue in You. May Your Light shine in the darkness, for the darkness has not overcome it.

We pray that You will raise up people to rescue those who are trapped and caught. May You bless the government to set policies and regulations to protect those who are suffering, both adults and children. We pray that they will have the wisdom and insight to unveil and collapse those sex industry and human trafficking organisations. In the name of Jesus we pray, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Father in heaven, I come to You today, not in the confidence of my own efforts but in the sure confidence of knowing that Your Son, Jesus, has made a way for me through His own perfect sacrifice. I bring You my praise, my worship, my thanks, my needs, my requests through Him and in His name, Jesus, Amen!

Certainty

Notice the absolute certainty of Jesus' Words and interactions with His disciples throughout today's reading:

"Where shall we prepare for the Passover?" His disciples ask Jesus. He and the disciples are outside the city, likely in Bethany. Yet Jesus gives specific step-by-step instructions and the exact question they are to ask to secure the room for that evening's Passover meal in Jerusalem. The disciples obey and find it "just as He had told them."

Later that evening, Jesus and the disciples share the Passover meal together. "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me," Jesus solemnly declares to the twelve men with whom He has shared His life for the preceding three or so years. What a betrayal! What a bombshell! How can this be? But He is the One who knows every person's heart.

And then, finally, as the evening closes, Jesus establishes a new fellowship meal, a new pattern that does not look back to the history of the Passover, but forward to a new and better covenant for them and for each one of us who calls Jesus our Lord. He takes bread, breaks it, blesses it and says, "Take; this is my body." He takes the cup, gives thanks and says, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

As certain as the earlier interactions of the day, how much more certain is the enduring truth Jesus declares that in His broken body and shed blood, we have an unshakeable covenant with our good God, based not on the best that we can do but on the best that Jesus has done for us. Let us think on Jesus this day!

Intercessory Prayer: Asylum Seekers and Refugees

Dear Heavenly Father, we praise You. For You are our refuge and protection. Thank You Lord, You've never forsaken us, even when people forsake us. We pray for all asylum seekers and refugees. May You comfort their hearts as they are finding refuge and comfort. May You show them that You're the light, the truth, and the life, they shall be able to find the Father through You. May Your spirit touch their hearts, so they will know that You are their rock and refuge.

We pray that You will bless the asylum seekers and refugee organisations, government officials, and churches who work hand in hand to protect, help, show support to those who are struggling. May You raise up churches to pray for the asylum seekers and refugees, to bring Your love, light, and compassion to them.

In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

O God,
seeing as there is in Christ Jesus an infinite fullness of all that
we can want or desire,
May we all receive from Him, grace upon grace;
grace to pardon our sins, and subdue our iniquities;
to justify our persons and to sanctify our souls;
and to complete that holy change, that renewal of our hearts,
Which will enable us to be transformed into the blessed image
in which You created us.
O make us all acceptable to be partakers of the inheritance of
Your saints in light. Amen.

- by John Wesley

(A Prayer For Grace)

Opening Prayer:

Dear God, as I come to You in prayer today, help me to place my full confidence in You and not in myself and what I think I can do. As I spend time with You through Your Word and with You in prayer and fellowship, strengthen my spirit, I pray, in Jesus' name, Amen!

Willing Spirit, Weak Flesh

In our Scripture reading today, what a show of weakness and strength are on full display! And as we meditate, what a timely reminder for our own lives since we are just as human as Peter and the other disciples were.

Knowing what is just ahead, Jesus warns, prepares, and encourages His disciples. "You will all fall away...after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee...Peter, you will deny me three times."

It's doubtful they take any of His Words to heart. In misplaced self-confidence, Peter is too busy declaring his determination and loyalty to Jesus by putting his friends down. Not to be outdone by boastful Peter, the other disciples likewise proclaim the same to Jesus—even if we die, we will not deny You!

Their declarations of strength and loyalty are soon proven hollow when Peter, James and John cannot even win the battle against sleep while Jesus agonizes in prayer! But here our Jesus shines through—in posture, seemingly weak as He falls to the ground before His Father. In prayer, desperate and agonized as He pleads that the cup might pass from Him. But oh, the strength of His spirit and determination as He wills the will of His Father!

The outcome of this evening is certain, isn't it? Of course, the disciples who could not stand in prayer, scatter in fear. And of course, Jesus, our Saviour, stands against the enemy in the calm and confident strength that the Scriptures, God's very Word, will be fulfilled because He has chosen the will of the Father!

Intercessory Prayer: Churches Preparing for Easter Services

Dear Lord Jesus, we praise You. You are the resurrected King. We praise Your victory. Thank You for Your sacrifice, Your willingness, and Your blood. As churches are preparing for Easter services, may You help us to prepare worships that are filled with Your presence, and Your heart will be fulfilled.

We pray that people's hearts will turn towards You, Lord Jesus, remembering Your love, Your suffering, Your mercy, and Your victory. Lord, please protect us from just planning and doing activities that satisfy our hearts, but we pray that we will be able to capture Your heart during the Easter Service. Help us to truly understand the meaning of Easter, and to live a life worthy of the calling that we have received. In Jesus' mighty name we pray, Amen.

Opening Prayer:

Father in Heaven, we want to praise You for the courage and love of our Saviour Jesus that enabled Him to bear up under enormous pressure and vile opposition. Grant that we would follow His example rather than that of Peter. Yet we are so aware of the weakness of our hearts and cry out to You to give us mercy and strength to honour Jesus whatever the provocations. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Facing opposition

At long last the religious leaders have managed to get their hands on Jesus. Ever since 11:18 they have been “looking for a way to kill Him.” Now they have Him they need to find reasons for the Roman authorities to do what they were not allowed to do - put Jesus to death as shamefully as possible. But this was not as easy as they'd imagined. Their witnesses couldn't agree and in the end it was the clear, bold statement of Jesus that He was the promised Messiah that provoked the cry of “blasphemy” from the High priest and unleashed the vile physical beatings of His followers.

Against this backdrop of Christ's glorious and confident courage Mark goes on to record the way that Peter responded as He sat in the courtyard below. It's not the threat of violence that causes Peter to fold and deny his Lord, it's the questions and accusations of a servant girl. We can hardly believe it when he begins to “call down curses”.

And yet before we begin to condemn Peter in our hearts we have to ask ourselves whether we do the same. We may not “curse” Christ but our silences in the face of criticism, mockery or threat can be just as telling. God grant us Christ-like courage to take our stand for Him.

Intercessory Prayer: Our Walk with the Lord according to His Purposes

Almighty Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus, to save us from sin, and by Your blood, redeeming us from being its slave, to the praise of Your glorious grace. In love and mercy, You desire us to walk in freedom as children of Light. According to Your excellent will, You chose us to be holy and blameless in Your sight. You have given us a living hope, and inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. Furthermore, You have prepared us to be a Kingdom of Priests to reign with You in Your new Heavenly Kingdom. This is all to Your Praise and Glory. May we seek You in the inner sanctuary of our souls; may we revel in Your goodness and delight ourselves in Your perfect Will. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Father in Heaven, we feel as if we are treading on holy ground as we meditate on what Jesus went through for sinners like us. We can only thank You in amazement and praise that the King of Glory was willing to suffer in place of rebels like us. Fill our hearts afresh with deep gratitude and overflowing praise. Humble our pride. Increase our view of Christ's work. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

In my place condemned He stood

The final details needed to be put in place if they were to get rid of Jesus. So a meeting of the whole ruling Jewish council – the Sanhedrin – was convened at first light to formally agree the charges to be placed against Jesus. And then the journey across town to the Governor's palace to present their prisoner. Pilate took Jesus inside his palace to continue the interrogation while the religious leaders waited outside and much to his amazement Pilate discovered this was no ordinary prisoner. To calm his conscience, he responded to the crowd's request by asking them whether they wanted Jesus released or a murderer named Barabbas. Mark (and the other gospel writers as well) sees this as deeply significant. A convict is released from prison and Jesus takes his place. The innocent goes to die in the place of the guilty. This is the very heart of the Gospel message. Jesus is the substitute for sinners like us. What love!

And just to make clear who this Jesus really is, Mark includes for us the harrowing and gory details of how the Roman soldiers (just like the religious leaders) mock and torture Jesus as the “king of the Jews” resplendent with his thorny crown and purple robe. “Love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Intercessory Prayer: Hope and Strength

Dear Heavenly Father, with gladness we lay down all our burdens at Your feet, and look to You, to seek Your face. We bow down to You, our only Hope, our Rock and our Redeemer. Lift up our countenance to You. Surely in You are our salvations. There our hearts are secure and our souls find rest. Our spirits, too, rejoice. We highly regard Your decrees; Your Words to us are life. In You alone do we put our trust, ready to follow to where You may lead throughout this Holy Week. May we walk before You in righteousness; may we serve You in humility. May Your presence be a light to those around us, to bless and to heal. Be glorified, O Holy Father! In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Father in Heaven, we find the love of Jesus for rebels like us beyond the reach of our human comprehension, and yet we know that it is true. Please melt our hard and self-focused hearts and let them be shaped by the love of our wonderful Saviour. May we also reflect His love in the words we speak and the actions we perform. May we understand afresh what it is to live sacrificially. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

And they crucified Him

The information is sparse and simple. Mark doesn't dwell on the physical horrors of the cross, gruesome though they were. For there is something far more significant going on as the true Passover lamb of God dies for His people. Jesus is so weak that someone else has to carry the cross beam to Golgotha; and upon the upright is then nailed the record of His crime – 'The King of the Jews.' But even with the agony and the ignominy of His suffering the insults and accusations keep raining down. The two crucified rebels hurl insults (Mark doesn't mention the change that came over one) and the chief priests and teachers of the law gloat over their apparent victory. But Mark typically sees more in their words than they would know – "Let this Messiah ... come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Of course, if Jesus had come down, if He had called upon His heavenly Father and the angelic host to destroy His enemies and release Him from the cross, then we would not have been saved, we could not have been saved. It was only because His love for sinners like us held Him there that the curse of sin could be broken; that the price of sin could be paid. "Hallelujah, what a Saviour!"

Intercessory Prayer: Humility and Repentance

O Lord, King of righteousness, King of the ages, King of Heaven, King of Glory, and King of Kings, You who came to save as a humble-babe born in a stable, not a castle, and though You commandeered no army, You conquered the world in loving-service. Teach us Your ways, thou servant-leader, that we may walk in Your Truth, and learn how to love and serve with a gracious and humble heart. Thank You for Your precious body broken for us, and covenant in Your blood shed for us. As we come before You to eat the bread of redemption and drink the cup of Your salvation, may our hearts be circumcised in remembrance of You. We set-apart ourselves to serve You wholeheartedly, seeking to lead others with Your love, Your mercy and grace. Lead us now. We're Your servants, ready to do Your Will. May our lives proclaim Your death and Your resurrection until You come. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Father in Heaven, we wonder what it must have been like for the Temple priests to try and repair the torn curtain when Jesus died. Thank You our task today is not to hide the way to You but to show and share how through Jesus the Way has been opened up for all who will come. Thank You so much that human divisions and distinctions count for nothing before the liberating gospel of Your Son. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

The way is opened up

No cry is more awesome or solemn than that which rang out after three hours of deep darkness – “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” Jesus is quoting from Psalm 22 but we can scarcely grasp its true meaning. For here Jesus, in His full humanity, is experiencing the wrath of God and the separation caused by sin. And it is only Jesus, in His full deity, who is able to bear such weight and secure for us such a glorious salvation.

Little wonder Mark goes on to record what the substitutionary work of Jesus the God - Man achieved. The thick, heavy curtain that hid the Holy of Holies in the Temple, is torn. The way is opened up. The first recorded believer is a Gentile soldier – “Surely this man was the Son of God!”, quickly followed by mention of women who had followed Jesus. Women were looked down upon in the society of their day but precious and honoured in the sight of God. Then there's even a distinguished member of the Jewish ruling Council, Joseph of Arimathea, wanting to stand apart from his colleagues and honour Jesus. For this is what the sacrificial death of Jesus achieves. It opens up the way for all who would come, and it's even made possible for rebels like us to enter into the friendship of Almighty God. Praise Him!

Intercessory Prayer: Recognizing the Sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross

O Jesus, on this day of Your death, we remember when the sun refused to shine and the light went out from this earth. We sit in darkness today, remembering all the trials you endured on our behalf. You freely bore our sins in Your body on the Tree, and became our ultimate sacrifice to save and reconcile us to Yourself. Considering a world without You, we are lost without hope! You are our only Hope, now living forevermore to intercede for us. Lord, today, we recommit our heart to knowing You in all Your wonder and mercy, never wanting to ever have to face life alone without You. Light our ways! Be the light of our lives all my days, so that no matter how difficult the road ahead, we will always follow You... until eternally at rest with You in Your Kingdom of Light! Come, Lord Jesus, come and fill this dark world with Your glorious light. In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Opening Prayer:

Father in Heaven, we are so grateful that we worship the risen Saviour who has conquered sin and death. We know that as He's done that most glorious work then there is nothing that we need to fear. Give us courage to proclaim Jesus, just as the fearful women went from the empty tomb to share the world changing news. Give us opportunities, and a ready, willing heart, to make Him known today. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

He has risen. He is not here

I don't know how you feel having read the passage before us. It's not what we were expecting. It certainly doesn't finish with the typical happy ending associated with many a story. It leaves us with various questions and doesn't tie up the 'loose ends'. But here is the genius of this Gospel, written under the leading of God.

Firstly, it touches on the area of fear, as Mark thinks of his Roman audience undergoing persecution and being fearful. What would they do? Just hunker down, run away, deny what they know to be true?

Secondly, it's a reminder to them, that although they were afraid, these women did go and tell others and as a result the Gospel was spread like wildfire throughout the Roman empire.

Thirdly, it's deliberately open-ended. How did the Gospel begin? – 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.' It's just the start of the story, of which we're a part; a story that's going around the globe.

We in turn go out to show and share this news of the living, loving Lord of Glory. We may be anxious about the sort of response we'll get from our friends, family and colleagues, but the least we can do, that we must do, is declare we've met with the risen, glorious, merciful Saviour.

Intercessory Prayer: A Prayer of Dedication

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for all You suffered for our benefit. You walked a hard, lonely road through shame, betrayal, persecution and rejection, all because of what You wanted for us, knowing that it would all be worth it in the end. You saw us fully-redeemed, sharing in Your Glory, and planned for our adoption to sonship. The light and life of men You came to bring surpasses anything this world can offer. Yet, our hearts grow cold, leading us to go astray, and we easily forget. When the road gets tough, we come to doubt and are filled with disbelief. Disconnected from our hope in You, we look for easier paths to follow, until we are deceived. Oh Lord, Jesus, protect us and preserve our lives. Draw us back to Yourself and gently encourage us in Your Love, to persevere no matter the struggle. You are our living hope and with You, we're never alone. Thank You for reminding us that You and Your plans for us are bigger than anything we face. Be glorified in our hearts today we pray, Amen!

*Dear Lord, today is a day of great rejoicing! Your death and resurrection has brought us out of darkness and into new life, abundant, eternal and free, through the forgiveness wrought in Your blood on the Cross. You have made us brand new, transformed us by Your Word with renewed purpose, and have empowered us through Your Holy Spirit to walk faithfully with You all our days through this fallen world into all eternity. As we journey, may our lives give testimony to Your Goodness, Your life-saving power and forgiveness! May this world be different, because of the difference You make in us! You are our Savior, our great reward, our true joy and lasting satisfaction! Fill us afresh with Your Spirit we pray.
In Jesus' Name, Amen!*

(Resurrection Sunday)

SERMON SERIES

Jesus: The Way Maker, Miracle Worker

Jesus' Power Over Evil (Mark 1:23-28) - 9 March

Jesus' Power Over Sickness (Mark 2:1-12) - 16 March

Jesus' Power Over Nature (Mark 4:35-41) - 23 March

Jesus' Power Over Provision (Mark 6:30-44) - 30 March

Jesus' Power Over Speech/Hearing (Mark 7:31-37) - 6 April

The Source of Jesus' Power: Prayer (Mark 9:14-29) - 13 April

Jesus' Power Over Death (Mark 16:1-8) - 20 April (Easter)

In-person and online

SCAN ME



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