



jesus the
ServantHero

Dear Evergreen-LA family,

This is an invitation to journey through the season of Lent with the ServantHero, Jesus. In these pages, you will find a road map designed to guide you and your SDQ group through reflective exercises that highlight some of Jesus' acts of service.

This journal is not meant to be read quickly. Instead, it is written as a tool to highlight the stories in Scripture of the ServantHero who purposefully taught, healed, and delivered people during his earthly time before the cross. We will be considering how Jesus interacted with various people; in particular, we will be paying close attention to how he serves each one differently.

What is Lent? Lent is the period between Ash Wednesday and Easter Sunday. Many Christians throughout history have considered this season the time to fast and pray in preparation for the celebration of Christ's resurrection on Easter Sunday. Oftentimes, the focus is on stripping away the excesses that get in the way of a pure and simple relationship with God. There are 6 weeks between Ash Wednesday and Palm Sunday, and the 7th week (between Palm and Easter Sunday) is known as Holy Week.

How is this journal organized? During each of the weeks, the anchor text is the same text that was considered during Sunday's sermon. All of the anchor texts can be found in the gospel of Mark, and the pace of the overview slows down during Holy Week to cover all the details of Mark 14-16 – Jesus' betrayal, death and resurrection.

Each week offers exercises for 3 reflection sessions. They are meant to be worked through on 3 different days in the week. The 3 are connected by theme, but they also stand alone as separate studies. Any of them can be used as the small group study that week. For each week, there is also a "Lenten suggestion", which is offered as a practical way to live out the example that has been considered that week.

May God grant you a blessed time in his Word as you consider the life and words of Jesus Christ. May this Lent be a rich and deep time, during which Jesus' life of service affects and changes your own. God bless you.

In Christ,
Pastor Sharon Koh
- On behalf of the EBCLA pastoral team

Week 1: February 21-27, 2010

Mark 10:45

This Lent, we will spend some time considering why and to whom Jesus came to serve. Perhaps the season spent considering many of the stories we have of Jesus serving others will give us reason to follow in Christ's footsteps.

Oftentimes, we slip into thinking of serving others as inconvenient or time consuming. Yet, we are challenged by Jesus' example and invited into a better understanding of what He is about when we allow ourselves to participate in this costly love of others.

Day 1

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Read **Mark 10:35-45**. What were James and John asking of Jesus? What do you think was their motive for this request? Why was this offensive to the other ten disciples?

Jesus responded with a mysterious question, "Can you drink the cup that I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" What do you think Jesus meant by this? Do you think their response was presumptuous or ignorant? (Notice what Jesus feels about the cup he has to drink in **Matthew 26:39**.) Nevertheless, Jesus seems to accept their answer as he moves on to a more important matter: the condition of their hearts.

We have recently been challenged by the words of warning in Matthew 23. There are some interesting parallels between these two passages. Read **Matthew 23:1-12**. Here, again, there is a fascination with seats of honor. But instead of directly going after the attitude of pride or presumptuousness, Jesus has a specific critique of the Pharisees. What is it? (v.3)

Take some time to consider *why* people would characterize anyone as “hypocritical”. Is it simply a failure to live up to ethical standards or is it more about an inconsistency between what is said and what is done?

Day 2

"Do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

Let's revisit the woe that Jesus pronounces on the Pharisees in **Matthew 23:25-28**. What is Jesus' main critique here?

What would be some good reasons behind serving others? What would be some poor motivations? Consider a time when you agreed to do something for someone else but you felt obliged or unhappy about it. If possible, talk about why you felt that way. Is it better to be honest and turn down a request because you don't want to do it, or to go ahead and do it while keeping your personal distaste for the task to yourself?

Re-read **Matthew 23:25-28**. What behavior is Jesus labeling as “self-indulgence” and “full of hypocrisy and wickedness”?

Day 3

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

Back to James and John. Read **Mark 10:35-45**. It sounds like the brothers assumed that sitting next to Jesus in glory would give them a position of power and authority. Maybe they pictured this as a reward for their years on earth following Jesus around.

Yet, Jesus responds with teaching about how the Kingdom of God is an “upside-down” kingdom: “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, *whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all.*”

What insight does this give you into “kingdom values”? That is, how does the kingdom of God operate differently from what we would describe as “normal”? If this is true, then who would be considered the most valuable person in the kingdom of God? How might Jesus suggest we honor these people?

It is important that we develop a “theology of service”. Why did Jesus serve? Why are we to serve? Is it just about altruistic behavior that fulfills our religious duty? Or, is there a deeper, “kingdom” value to the people we serve and the reason we serve them?

Lenten suggestion

It is a tradition to “give up” something for Lent each year in preparation for Easter. Somewhere in the depriving ourselves of something we would otherwise find enjoyable, we are reminded of our finiteness and dependence on God.

Before we get into further discussions about the kinds of people that Jesus served and how he served them, perhaps we can consider a different kind of fast this Lent: Consider “giving up” serving others for the wrong reasons.

Even as we grow in our understanding of service as Jesus modeled it, let’s first heed Christ’s warnings about what’s going on inside as being more important than the task at hand. Then, perhaps later we can consider ways that we can give of ourselves in serving others.

Week 2: February 28 – March 6, 2010 ***Mark 5:1-20***

Over the next few weeks of Lent, we will see Jesus interacting with various people from all different walks in life. In all of these situations, Jesus

responds to their needs by serving them in the way that they most needed kindness. This week, we see Jesus serving someone who was rejected by society and living naked among the dead because of his issues.

Day 1

"Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region."

Read **Mark 5:1-5**. Take a moment to notice this man's situation: He was living in the tombs, and he was so strong that he would break through the chains that people would try to bind him with. If you lived in his town, how would you feel toward this man? Why do you suppose they left him to yell and cut himself in the tombs?

Before we focus on the interaction between Jesus and this man, let's take a moment to think about when we find ourselves feeling like this towards someone. Who do you fear? Why? When there is someone that you fear in your life, how do you typically respond? Do you blame the villagers from the nearby town for leaving this man out by the graveyard?

Now, read **Mark 5:6-13**. What is the very first thing that Jesus says to the man?

Jesus responded to this man by immediately identifying the man's need and then dealing with the problem. When the crowd came out to see what had happened, their reaction is difficult to understand. Read **Mark 5:14-17**. Place yourself in the villagers' shoes. Why did they want Jesus to go away? How is this similar to the ways we respond to situations we don't understand or fear in our lives today?

Jesus primarily served the demon-possessed man, but he also served the town and family that the man came from. Later, he sends the man back to his family to tell of how he had been shown mercy. If this man were sent back to live in your neighborhood, how would you feel? How would you respond?

Day 2

"As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him."

Today, we will focus on this story from a different angle. Instead of considering the community that the man came from and returned to, consider the man himself. Re-read **Mark 5:5**. This man was plagued by the demons that had possessed him. Jesus' first words in the situation were, "Come out of this man, you evil spirit!"

The Apostle Paul exclaims, "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms." Read **Ephesians 5:10-18** to consider what Paul says to do about this struggle.

Who or what gives us the authority to resist the "powers of the dark world"? How do we do this?

Jesus powerfully exercises authority over the legion of demons by commanding them into a herd of 2,000 pigs. Meanwhile, the man is able to get dressed and return to his right mind. With his burden removed, he immediately responds with gratitude and asks to be allowed to go with Jesus.

Jesus clearly served this man. When Jesus removes a radically life-altering burden from our lives, how do we typically respond?

Dwell on this thought: "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (**Romans 8:38, 39**)

Day 3

"Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."

Out of gratitude to the ServantHero, the man asked to go with Jesus - presumably so that he could be one of Jesus' followers. Or, perhaps the man wanted to serve Jesus as a form of thanks for the service Jesus had given him? Jesus' answer to him is interesting, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." What do you suppose Jesus meant by this? Why do you think Jesus sent the man back to his family instead of allowing him on the boat with him?

Earlier this week, we talked about the difficulty the town had with receiving this man back into their community. How do you think this man's family responded to having him back? Re-read **Mark 5:19, 20**.

Oftentimes, our families are not the primary benefactors when we receive mercy from our Lord. In many situations, they are the very last to receive grace after grace has been extended. In this situation, Jesus encouraged this man to "pay it forward" by telling his own family about how much the Lord had done for him.

Lenten Suggestion

This Lent, we've been offered the suggestion of "giving up" serving others for the wrong reasons – obligation, guilt, selfishness etc...

This week, consider picking a family member or two who you can serve *because* we ourselves have received God's grace. Perhaps a spouse, parent, grandparent or child could be blessed by the extension of love in the form of service this week. Choose one act of service you'd like to fulfill this week and write it here:

Week 3: March 7-13, 2010

Mark 5:21-43

As the ServantHero continues to interact with various people that approach him for help, we can't help but notice that Jesus' response varies from person to person. In some cases, he delivers them. In some cases, he heals them. This week, we will consider two different stories in which Jesus brings life to someone who was dead.

Day 1

"Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live."

Read **Mark 5:21-24**. This story follows on the heels of the previous story. After Jesus healed the possessed man in the tombs and sent him back to his family, he crossed back over to the other side of the lake. The crowds in the two stories behave quite differently though. In the previous story, the crowd begged Jesus to leave after he powerfully healed the man. In this story, the crowd is gathered and waiting for him once he lands. Put yourself in this crowd. What are you hoping to see or hear?

Jairus "the synagogue ruler" would have been a respected and well-known lay leader in the synagogue. It was likely that he had some responsibility for the arranging of the service in the synagogue. In our church community, he might've been a deacon or a ministry leader. What do you notice about his earnest request of Jesus?

"My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her *so that she will be healed and live.*" This father is clearly suffering because someone dear to him is dying. Yet, his faith stands out because he is confident that if Jesus comes to see her, she will be healed.

If you are a parent, think or share a little about the extent of your love for your children. What would you be willing to do if your child was the one dying? If you were in Jairus' shoes, would your request of Jesus be filled with hope? despair? confidence? doubt? If you are not a parent, dwell a little

on a sacrifice that your parent(s) made for you. Why do you remember it so well? How is your life different because of that gift?

Day 2

"If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed."

Suddenly, the urgent mission with Jairus is interrupted. With people jostling Jesus left and right and the disciples trying to help him quickly make his way to the dying little girl, Jesus stops abruptly, "Who touched my clothes?" Read **Mark 5:24-34**. Jesus' disciples seem a little impatient with him. Why do you think they answered his question the way they did?

Notice this woman's situation. What details do we know about her suffering?

Twelve years is a very long time to live with any physical condition. In this woman's society, her condition would have also rendered her ritually unclean. When you have invested a lot of resources into solving a medical problem that you have, what kind of expectations do you have? If the problem is not solved, how do you begin to feel?

This woman had spent all her money seeing all the specialists she could consult. But, instead of getting better, the condition was getting worse. For twelve years, she had lived as an outcast of society – untouched and unclean (**Leviticus 15:25-33**). Her physical and emotional brokenness come through in her thoughts, "If I just..." Do you think her thoughts came out of a place of faith or desperation? In this way, how is her situation similar to Jairus'?

Are you in a place of desperate need for Jesus' healing? What kind of prayers come out of the depth of your soul these days?

Day 3

“Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

Compare and contrast Jesus’ interaction with these two people. How differently would the crowd have perceived the synagogue ruler and the unclean woman? Would the crowd have thought of one of them as being more deserving of the ServantHero’s attention and time? Yet, how does Jesus treat each of them?

What do you make of the fact that Jesus interrupted his trip to Jairus’ home to pause and talk to the woman? It is possible that Jesus knew he had healed the woman, let the situation pass and hurried on to Jairus’ place. Instead, Jesus stops because he is aware that something significant had happened. The woman’s life and body were changed. Why do you think he stopped?

Re-read **Mark 5:32-34**. Picture the tone of voice that Jesus spoke to this woman with. What expression did he have when he made eye-contact with her? Would Jesus have been the first person to look her in the eye in a long time? How did Jesus serve this woman? Was it just the fact that he healed her? Or, did he do more than that with his kindness and gentle love?

Freed. Jesus freed this woman. He then goes on to serve Jairus in a different way. Read **Mark 5:35-43**. How did Jesus serve Jairus and his family? What do you notice about the way Jesus carries himself in Jairus’ home?

Lenten suggestion

Many of us know someone who has been suffering from a chronic disease. In many situations, it is easier to visit someone in the hospital who you know will recover. The ones with long-term conditions slip out of mind. Perhaps this is a good week to bring back to mind someone we’ve forgotten. Perhaps we can pay them a visit and bring with us the kindness that Jesus freed the woman in this story with. Perhaps we can value them for who they are and not define them by their condition.

Week 4: March 14-20, 2010

Mark 6:1-6

At times, we are guilty of holding grudges for such a long period of time that it poisons that relationship and many of the ones around it. Have you been held to something you did for so long that it felt unfair to still be characterized by that mistake?

This week, we consider the ServantHero rejected. Jesus was able to serve so many people in so many different towns and villages, but the people in his own hometown had their doubts.

Day 1

"Only in his hometown, among his relatives and in his own house is a prophet without honor."

This week, we view the homecoming reception for the man who had just delivered a demon-possessed man across the lake, healed a woman from 12 years of continuous bleeding, and raised a little girl from the dead. Read **Mark 6:1-4**. What is the main accusation against Jesus? Was he teaching different things or offering a different kind of service here in Nazareth?

It looks like Jesus' teaching was just as effective in this town as in others. The response, "many who heard him were amazed" indicates that he was still explaining and teaching the law well. Yet, the crowd is critical of Jesus. Consider the logic of their skepticism. If this man was trained to work with his hands, then how did he get the kind of wisdom that belongs to someone who was trained as rabbi? To what extent do you think their skepticism is reasonable? To what extent do you think their skepticism is unfair?

What about the idea that this man is defined and limited by his family identity and background? Have you been in a situation when you were tempted to do the same thing? Have you been at the receiving end of an unspoken attitude like this? How did it feel? Why?

Day 2

“By faith the prostitute Rahab, because she welcomed the spies, was not killed with those who were disobedient.”

Let’s consider a different and contrasting story from Israel’s history. Read **Joshua 2:1-21**. At the beginning of the story, the two men were staying in a prostitute’s home. If you were watching this play out, what would be your initial opinion of these two men? What would you think they were up to? What were the king’s men likely thinking as they interrogated the prostitute?

Try putting yourself in Rahab’s shoes. What would be her main motivation for lying to save the spies? Why help them? Read carefully her explanation in **Joshua 2:8-13**. Rahab is expressing fear and reverence for a God that she had only heard about at that point, Yahweh. How do you define faith? Would you consider this an expression of robust faith on Rahab’s part? Why?

The spies seem entirely unconcerned with this woman’s past. As a matter of fact, it doesn’t come up once in their conversation. If you were in their shoes, would it be more difficult to get past this woman’s past? Would you be inclined to define her by her profession?

Rahab is remembered for generations. How does scripture define Rahab (**James 2:25** and **Matthew 1:5**)? What is she best remembered for? Would you rather be remembered for a good decision in your past or a bad one?

Day 3

"He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith."

Read **Mark 6:4-6**. The statement that rings out against Jesus' own hometown is that he was amazed by their lack of faith. This is described as the reason that Jesus is unable to do any miracles there. Unbelief excluded the people of Nazareth from the grace and healing that Jesus extended in other towns. If Jesus came to visit your home or immediate context, would he find you eager and grateful for the service that he is offering you, or would he be "amazed" at you?

Thus far, we have been considering how the ServantHero seemed to know in each case exactly what would best serve that person. In one case, the man needed deliverance; in another, the woman needed compassion and healing. If our Lord asked you directly, "What do you want?" What would be your response?

Take some time to pray over the things that you need most. Allow Jesus some time to speak into these desires of your heart.

Lenten suggestion

It is difficult to identify the times that we are guilty of defining someone by their past or family background. It comes so naturally. "Oh, he's just that way because..." "Well, this has everything to do with her relationship history." This week, consider someone that you dislike. Why do you dislike them? Is it their behavior? Their personality? A grievance from the past?

It may be difficult, but with God's help, have a conversation with them that is not shadowed by a preconceived notion or even a memory of something that happened in the past. If necessary, try to look beyond their appearance or mannerisms, and see if you can see them through Jesus' eyes. If the ServantHero were having a conversation with this person, what would he identify as the necessary way to serve them?

Consider serving them in this way.

Week 5: March 15-21, 2010

Mark 10:13-16

A new mother once described the hours of midnight to 5am as the hardest hours of the day to tend her baby's needs. Have you been in a situation when you wished that a child would stop crying? Perhaps this was your own child. Have you ever wished that they would stop asking, "Why?"

Jesus' disciples, like many of us, saw the children as an interruption. They were not able to sit still and listen to the rabbi's teachings. They fidgeted, squirmed and asked, "Why?" But, their parents still knew the value of having Jesus touch and bless their children, so they were pushing them forward in the crowd.

Day 1

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them..."

Read **Mark 10:13-16**. How do you picture this scene taking place? What was the topic of discussion right before this interaction? Would you consider that topic an "adult" conversation? Why do you think the disciples felt the need to rebuke the people who were bringing children to Jesus?

There are many situations in which we deem children to be inappropriate participants: Heated conversations between parents, R-rated movies, and solemn church services.

Solemn church services? Where do we get the idea that children and their short attention spans do not belong in a worship context? From what Jesus says in these verses, what do you think his response would be?

Consider the children in your life (your own or someone else's). How do you encourage them to get to know Jesus?

Day 2

"... for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."

Jesus has some very interesting things to say about the kingdom of God. Read the following texts and paraphrase what he is saying about this kingdom: **Mark 1:14, 15; Mark 4:1-20; Mark 4:26-29; Mark 4:30-32;** and **Mark 9:1**

What is the kingdom of God? What makes anything the kingdom of so-and-so? In each of the above texts, Jesus is trying to help his listeners better understand what the kingdom of God is like. So, he starts many of his teachings with, "The kingdom of God is like..." As far as you can tell, what is the kingdom of God like? Why would it be desirable?

Now, read **Mark 10:15**. What makes the kingdom of God accessible? What does Jesus mean by this?

Jesus first tells the disciples to allow the children to have access to him, but then he makes a strong statement about them, "anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will *never* enter it." There is something about who children are that offers adults a clue as to how we are to understand and receive the kingdom of God. How will we know what this is if we do not allow children to access our lives?

Consider how you have received the kingdom of God in your own life. What words would characterize the ways you have received this rule? Is there anything about the way you have received the kingdom that you would like prayer about?

Day 3

"If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

Read **Mark 9:33-37**. Jesus caught a few of his disciples in an argument about which of them is the greatest. He then makes a clear statement about what makes someone great in the kingdom of God. Who is considered "great" in the upside down kingdom?

We again see Jesus illustrating how he feels about children. He has the child stand among them, and then he hugs the child and tells them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me..." Notice the sequence of these events. The Mark 9 incident happens before the Mark 10 incident. So, the disciples were rebuking the people even after Jesus said that welcoming children is like welcoming Jesus himself!

"... and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." Who is Jesus referring to here? Is this person someone that you want to welcome in your life? Why or why not?

Lenten Suggestion

This week, we've seen a lot of situations where Jesus suggests that access to the kingdom of God is available through serving a child. In some ways, he lifts up children as more important than adults – probably to the chagrin of the adults listening to him. Children have different needs from adults. Yet, their impatience or their rawness can often get in the way of how we perceive them. "Children are meant to be seen but not heard."

Consider serving a child or a group of children in a way that you have not served them before. They may be your own children or other people's children. Perhaps you know them from church or in a classroom. What would it take for you to serve them? How would it be different this time than any other time you've done something for them? What might God be teaching you this week? How is God growing you in your understanding of his kingdom?

Week 6: March 22-28, 2010

Mark 10:17-31

One of the most interesting characteristics of Jesus' responses is that he reads between the lines. In many of his answers to questions posed to him, Jesus appears to be changing the subject. At first glance, it even looks like he isn't really listening to the person asking for help. For example, when some friends lower a paralytic in front of Jesus, he responds with, "Son, your sins are forgiven." (**Mark 2:5**) At another time, the religious leaders want to know who gave Jesus authority to perform miracles, and he responds with, "John's baptism – was it from heaven, or from men? Tell me!" (**Mark 11:29**)

Day 1

"Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

Read **Mark 10:17-21**. In your opinion, do you think Jesus answered this man's question?

The young man seems to be in a humble posture - he kneels and he demonstrates long-term, earnest obedience. He had been studying and keeping the commandments since he was a boy! If you were in Jesus' shoes, how might you have responded to him?

Based on the text, how did Jesus respond to this young man? Picture yourself in the young man's shoes, what is your primary motive for asking Jesus this question about eternal life? Jesus looked at this man with love in his eyes. And, out of this love, what does Jesus offer as his answer to *how* to inherit eternal life?

Now, read **Mark 10:21-25**. We have been paying attention to the way that the ServantHero responds to different people's specific needs. Some have needed deliverance, some have needed healing, and some have needed reprimanding. In this situation, Jesus also sees exactly what was in the way of this young man's road to eternal life. What was it?

Many of Jesus' clearest teachings on money can be found in the Sermon on the Mount. Read **Matthew 6:1-4** and **Matthew 6:19-24**. What does Jesus say about money here? How would our lives look different if we took this teaching to heart?

Day 2

"My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations."

As the gospel of Mark moves us closer to the ServantHero's act of passion and service, we find Jesus in the temple. Read **Mark 11:15-19**. Since the temple courts were the site of religious activity and ritual sacrifice, it was quite logical that there were animals being sold in there. This was a matter of convenience – travelers from far off towns would be able to exchange money and purchase the necessary animals for sacrifice upon arrival in Jerusalem.

So, what was it that upset Jesus about the buying and selling at the temple?

If Jesus were to enter your home, what would he notice is your most important value? Would this upset him?

In this incident, Jesus is upset about the fact that the temple is no longer a house of prayer. The animals present and the butchering of animals for sacrifice had a distinctive sound and smell to it. And, this would have overpowered the aroma or ambience of worship. What are some things that we allow in our lives that overpower our worship before God? How would you like prayer as you "drive out" these things in your life?

Jesus describes the temple as a house of prayer *for all nations*. Take a few moments to pray for a specific nation that is need in the world today.

Day 3

"With man, this is impossible, but not with God; All things are possible with God."

Read **Mark 10:17-31**. With great compassion, Jesus is firm in his answer to the young man, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." We don't get to see what the young man chooses, we only read that his face fell because Jesus was asking him to give up something that had become very dear to him. Clearly, this was something that he would have to struggle with.

Do you agree with the statement, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God"? Where have you seen this illustrated? In terms of wealth, where have you noticed that it is easier for poor people to enter God's kingdom? Have you noticed it to be harder for rich people? Which category would you put yourself in?

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Many of us would react with the disciples in despair, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus reassuringly reminds us that impossible things are possible with our God. What are some areas in your life that you would like to see God do the impossible? What are some areas you would like him to give you a change of heart?

Lenten suggestion

Jesus understood what this young man needed to hear. It was not his obedience or devotion that was in question. It was his attachment to his wealth. This week, consider giving away something that would cost you dearly.

As you choose the recipient of this gift, try to identify someone who would not have access to this without your willingness to let it go. As you give, enjoy freedom from being bound to your possession or to your money.

Holy Week: March 29 – April 4th, 2010

Mark 14 - 16

This week, we will change our rhythm a little bit. The readings we'll cover will give us an overview of the events of Holy Week. What was Jesus experiencing? What was he feeling? As you journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Sunday, pause in the upper room, feel his heart break at Gethsemane, and wait anxiously with his disciples after his burial. Historically, the events of this week have been referred to as the "passion" of Christ. From Scripture, what would you say Jesus cared most about?

Day 1

"Take it; this is my body... This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."

Read **Mark 14:12-26**. Jesus was able to enjoy one last meal with his disciples before his betrayal. It is both interesting and ironic that this meal was the Passover meal because this is the meal in the Jewish calendar that harkened back to a time when their lives were spared in Egypt. The Passover lamb had been sacrificed annually for centuries to prepare for this very night. So, pay close attention to what Jesus says here.

What covenant is Jesus referring to? What is it a promise of? What is it a promise about? Read **I Corinthians 11:23-29**. Does this help you better understand the practice of Communion? Why do we participate in Communion?

Jesus also predicted the betrayal by two of his disciples that evening, Judas and Peter. What did he predict about each of them? What happens to both of them in the future? Read **Mark 14:27-31; Mark 14:43-46; Mark 14:66-72**. Why do you think their outcomes were so different? What is the difference between the way these two disciples are remembered?

Day 2

"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death."

Gethsemane is the darkest point of Jesus' soul. We have no other text that shows us such anguish in Jesus' heart. Read **Mark 14:32-42** a few times. Dwell in the emotions of the moment. What was going on in Jesus? What was going on for the disciples? Have you ever been in this dark, dark place? Where did you turn when you were there? What did you pray?

Take the time to read through the text of **Mark 14:43-52**. What stands out to you in this story? Picture yourself as part of this scene, how do you see yourself participating in the death of Jesus? Would you be cowering in the bushes or ready to fight with a sword? What does this reveal to you about yourself and your relationship with Jesus?

Day 3

"He is risen! He is not here."

Read **Mark 14:53-65**. Based on what you read here, what did Jesus get crucified for? Why was this offense so great that it required his life? Now read **Mark 15:1-15**. Again, based on what you read in these verses, what did Jesus get crucified for? Was this offense greater than Barabbas' crime?

Read **Mark 15:16-47**. What details about Jesus' death do notice? In particular, take note of the different people that interacted with him on the way – the soldiers, Simon of Cyrene, the robbers, the Mary's and Salome, Joseph of Arimathea. How did each one treat Jesus? Why?

As you read **Mark 16:1-8**, consider what difference the bodily resurrection of Jesus makes in your life. Would your relationship with God be any different if Jesus did not rise on the third day? Is the resurrection of Jesus at the core of your theology?

Lenten Suggestion

It has been an age-old Church tradition to fast during Holy Week. Most have tried to focus their fasting on Good Friday in the spirit of remembering a dark and deprived day. Others have modified the fast to include consuming only liquids or allowing only certain types of food. In the spirit of **Matthew 6:16-18**, join Christians around the world in fasting on Good Friday to allow space for yourself to pray and carefully internalize the events surrounding Jesus' betrayal, accusation, crucifixion, death and, eventually, resurrection. Allow yourself the time to journey with the disciples and the women who did not know what to expect.

May God grant you a blessed Easter and a deeper, richer understanding of Christ's love for you as you journey through the text of Passion Week.

My Lenten Notes



evergreen

baptist church of los angeles

1255 san gabriel blvd.

rosemead, ca 91770

www.ebcla.org