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Introduction to our 40 Days of Prayer

Dear Good Shepherd Church Family,

Good Shepherd Lutheran Church is preparing to embark on a prayer journey over the next 43 days. Your pastors and staff are excited to be walking together with our Savior Jesus Christ and with our church family on a journey of transformation as we begin 2023.

Our prayer is that you will use this devotional as a daily prayer guide to help you grow deeper in your faith and strengthen your covenant relationship with God. Our hope is that you will find a time and place to let God's Word impact and influence your life.

We pray that the Lord Jesus will reveal Himself to you as you strive to answer Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am" over these 43 days of prayer. We ask the Holy Spirit to saturate your heart with the truth of Jesus Christ, and that your encounter with the Savior each day will reveal the love of Jesus more fully in your life.

If you have a heart for revival and have been longing for the presence of Christ to be manifested in your life, family, church, and community, please pray through this prayer guide with hope. Take time over the next 43 days to be centered in God's Word and abide with our Savior daily. Read and pray with the expectation that God will use this prayer guide to open your hearts and reveal His love for you more fully. We pray that your heart and soul turn to Christ with an even greater depth of love, devotion, and longing for Him.

A dedicated team of prayer warriors prepared the devotions and prayers for each day and we extend our many thanks to Gale Stringham, Jim Nelson, Cleone Larson, Barb Nelson.

As we are taught in 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18, "Pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Let us take time over the next 43 days to use this Prayer Guide, as we join in praying, "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You." May the Holy Spirit fill you with God's love and grace as you fall more deeply in love with our Lord Jesus Christ who is our Immanuel.

Pastor Susan Westland

Don't Go Hungry

“Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

Today we start our 40 days of prayer by examining the first of the 7 specific I AM statements where Jesus declares Himself to be the Bread of Life. As we do it is important to remember the Bible tells us that Jesus, when speaking to the masses, liked to use examples of things that were familiar to His listeners. For instance, Jesus would often talk about the sun and the rain to explain God’s grace upon all mankind. He would talk about planting seeds or going fishing to explain the importance of reaching others with the truth of the Gospel. Jesus spoke of a farmer, a king, a merchant, a vineyard, a pearl, a lamp, a son, a wedding, a treasure in a field; all things everyday men and women knew. When we come to the I AM statements of Jesus it is no different and today's subject is one that is very common to all of us. It is a particular tasty topic and that is bread!

Jesus uses bread in His teachings, parables, and miracles. When tempted by the Devil to turn stones into food, Jesus responded by quoting scripture: “Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:1-4). When teaching His disciples to pray, He includes the phrase, “Give us today our daily bread” (Matthew 6:5-15). One of His amazing miracles involves breaking five loaves of bread and two fish, and providing enough food for 5,000 men (Luke 9:10-17). And in John 6, Jesus refers to Himself saying, “I am the Bread of Life.”

Jesus—God in human flesh—knows our physical and spiritual hungering. Jesus knows that we need bread for sustenance. Jesus wants to be the “Bread” that sustains us, our daily “Bread” that comes from Heaven.

So, what are you hungering for? Are you looking for the “Bread” that will truly satisfy?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, we too are tempted everyday to eat false bread that never satisfies us. Today, we ask You to send the Holy Spirit to feed us from the true Bread of Life, we pray in Jesus name - Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Feasting on the Bread

“Jesus declared, “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.” (John 6:35)

When my oldest son was a baby, I learned how to make homemade bread. In the early days of learning how to make bread we experienced the occasional leavening issues and the irregular shapes of those loaves. Despite these issues, he loved making and eating homemade bread and so once a week, we made several loaves of bread. At first, I did all the work, but as he got older one of the highlights of his week was helping in the bread making process. In fact, some of my favorite memories of his childhood are of his body being covered in flour as he learned how to knead the bread. Another is of him sitting on the floor in front of the oven watching the bread bake as he anticipated the moment when we would cut into the freshly made loaf and the smell of the bread would fill the house.

You know, the crowds that followed Jesus loved bread too. After Jesus provided a miracle feast for more than 5,000 people by multiplying five loaves and two fish, the people followed after Him, hoping for more bread. Their hunger for physical bread provided Jesus with a teaching moment to talk about spiritual bread.

In the first of seven “I Am” statements in John's gospel account, Jesus says, “I am the bread of life.” In their eagerness for free food, the crowds had missed the main point of Jesus’ banquet in the wilderness. They had forgotten that God had provided the ancient people of Israel with bread from heaven (manna) in the wilderness (see Exodus 16). And the physical bread Jesus had provided for them pointed them to the spiritual bread of His body, the bread of life, that would be given to all God’s people through His death on the cross. Yes, homemade bread is wonderful, but eventually it runs out. Only those who feast spiritually on Jesus’ body will hunger no more. Jesus declared, “I AM the bread of life!” Do you believe Him? When you come to His table of grace and forgiveness, are you filled up with His feast?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, You are the Bread of life, help us feast on this meal so that we may do your will today and every day - Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

A Simple Loaf of Bread

“By the sweat of your face you will eat your bread...” (Genesis 3:19)

Who doesn't like bread? Freshly baked... still warm out of the oven... a little bit of butter... mmm mmm mmm. Mankind has been baking loaves for thousands of years. A simple loaf of bread feeds the poorest and the most well off amongst us. Wherever you go on this planet, bread, whether it is a bagel, a baguette or banana bread, is being consumed every day. From a quick survey of the Bible, we see that it has been that way right from the very beginning.

The first mention of bread goes right back to the fall of mankind when God told Adam, “By the sweat of your face you will eat your bread, until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return.” (Genesis 3:19)

Can you image the shock Adam and Eve experienced when they had to start fending for themselves, including learning how to cook and make their own bread. Can you imagine the pain they suffered after they lost their perfect relationship with God when they doubted His goodness and pushed beyond the boundaries of His plan. Their hunger for the return of their intimate relationship with God must have been overwhelming.

Yet, God did not abandon them to their sin's consequences. Instead, God made a way for Adam and Eve [and for all of us] to receive the promise of a cure that one day God would send His Son to be the one who would crush the “serpent's head.” (Genesis 3:15)

God made a way for us to be fed through His Son Jesus. We don't have to be hungry anymore. So, let us hunger for a deeper more intimate relationship with Jesus who is our Bread of life.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, we are hungry for You. As we sit at Your feet today, feed us with Your truth, draw us closer to Your heart, and transform us into the disciples You need us to be we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Believing in the One

“Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill.” (John 6:26)

At the beginning of the 6th chapter of John Jesus miraculously fed the 5,000+ people. This miracle was followed by the story of Him walking on water and calming the storm. In the following verses we read that Jesus and His followers were on the opposite shore of the lake and the crowd He fed earlier wanted to know when He got there.

But Jesus knows the true motive of the crowd. He tells them they are not following Him out of faith, but out of hunger for physical food. They don't care how they were fed; they just wanted food. He tells them not to work for food that spoils, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which is the Son of Man.

This is a hard teaching for most of them and they ask Jesus what they need to do the work God requires of them. In verse 29 Jesus answered the crowd saying: “This is the only work God wants from you: “Believe in the one He has sent.”

Then Jesus declared, “I am the bread of Life.” In this statement He taught them [and us] that He is the source of our provision, of our salvation, and He is all we need.

Verse 41 tells us that many of the Jews who were following Jesus began to grumble and many turned away and stopped following Him.

When we hear these words of Jesus, do we grumble at the hard teaching and walk away? Or do we trust in Jesus and do the work God requires: “to believe in the one he [that is God] sent?”

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, so often we grumble and mumble and accuse You of feeding us “hard teachings” when we want free bread. Forgive us and help us believe in You we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Life Sustaining Bread

Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill." (John 6:26)

Throughout chapter 6 of John's Gospel, Jesus is interacting with the crowds of people who have been following Him. As we discovered in our devotion yesterday, the crowd had followed Jesus for more food, but Jesus corrected them and told the crowd they needed to seek Him.

Jesus told them to, "seek the eternal bread" The one that won't perish, the one that is eternal. And then vs 35 again Jesus said, "...I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to Me shall never hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst." Jesus now identified Himself as the bread about which He had been speaking. The eternal bread that you seek is me. Jesus did not say He had the bread of life, but that He was that bread.

So, what does Jesus promise?

Let's break this down. Jesus is saying: I don't care who you are, I don't care what your social status is, I don't care where you live, I don't care what sins you carry, I don't care what church you go to, I don't care who your parents are, whoever comes to Me shall NEVER hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall NEVER thirst.

I will complete you! I am everything you need to live! I am everything you need to survive! For you will NEVER hunger and you will NEVER thirst. IF YOU COME TO ME! Jesus tells the crowd, "I am the life sustaining bread that you seek."

What life sustain bread have we sought after this week? Has it been the bread of the world, or the Bread of Life? What do we need to do to hunger after Jesus and not the world?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: What life sustain bread have we sought after this week? Has it been the bread of the world, or the Bread of Life? What do we need to do to hunger after Jesus and not the world? – Amen.

Personal Prayer: "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You."

Do This in Remembrance of Me

“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you..” (Luke 22: 19-20

When we are hungry, bread satisfies. God provided bread for His people throughout their history, supplying for them in their need and when they could not provide for themselves. Perhaps, then, it should be no wonder that at the last supper, Jesus speaks to His disciples—and to us too saying, “This is my body...take and eat.”

Luke 22:17 tells us the hour had come, the Passover meal had been prepared, Jesus and His disciples had gathered around the table of remembrance as Jesus stood up, took bread, and He gave thanks saying, [“Blessed art Thou O Lord God, King of the universe, who brings forth BREAD from the earth.”] Then He broke it, and gave it to His disciples saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.”

Did you hear what Jesus said in this prayer? He was prophesying His own resurrection. At the Passover feast, Jesus was giving thanks to His Father saying, “Blessed are you O God – King of the universe who will bring forth – the BREAD of LIFE – who will bring Me – King Jesus – forth from the earth – when I am resurrected!”

I pray the significance of this prayer stays with us as we continue our 40 days of prayer. I pray we can come to the communion table in “remembrance” of our Savior Jesus who cut the New Covenant sealed with His blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, so often we come to the communion table like robots, not really thinking about the sacrifice it took for us to feast at Your table. This week, please draw us close to Your heart and help us hunger for Your bread that satisfies all our needs we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

The House of Bread

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times." (Micah 5:2)

Five or six miles southwest of Jerusalem lay the tiny town of Bethlehem in the Judean hills. It was here that man's eyes first saw God in the flesh. The literal meaning of the name Bethlehem is, "The House of Bread" and this is where our Savior Jesus, who is the Bread of Life, was born.

Jesus was born in the House of Bread not in the house of royalty, nor the house of riches, nor the house of celebrity. Jesus was not born in Jerusalem, nor in Rome, nor in Athens or Alexandria. Jesus was not born in any political, commercial, cultural, educational, or socially significant city of the day.

Bread is one of life's most common things and God wanted His Son available to all people. So His birth was announced to shepherds, the common man, but not to King Herod. His cradle was a manger, an animal's feeding trough in a lowly stable so there could be no human so low that he or she is outside the reach of the love of God!

Jesus said, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger." (John 6:35) Bread is a good comparison to our Lord because He satisfies, gratifies, and strengthens us spiritually just as bread does physically. But many of us are eating at the wrong table. It is easy to get caught up in searching for meaning in life from the wrong things that only bring temporary happiness. But only Christ can satisfy all the eternal dimensions of the human spirit.

May we find confidence in the fact that Jesus was born in "The House of Bread" for God does indeed want to choose us to be His children, no matter how insignificant we may seem to ourselves or to the world around us.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Jesus, our Bread that satisfies all our hunger, help us lift our eyes to the heavens where You are found. Come and feed us today with Your truth, Your love, and Your peace we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You."

“I AM the Light of the World!”

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

This week we are going to focus on John 8:12 when Jesus declared, “I AM the Light of the World. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”

When Jesus said this statement, Jesus was at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. The Feast of Tabernacles was near so this was an opportunity for Jesus to display Himself publicly to a large number of people. (The Feast of Tabernacles is a week-long fall festival commemorating the 40-year journey of the Israelites in the wilderness.)

There is a close connection to light and life. In this world life is dependent on light. John transfers this to the spiritual world. This light is personal not external as the light from a lamp. This light is a spiritual enlightenment which man has received from God.

Jesus declared He was the Light of the World, but what do we say about Jesus? What do we believe about Jesus?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Father, thank You for creating light that takes away the darkness we face. Holy Spirit, fill us with the Light of the World so we can be transformed by God’s light we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

“Let There Be Light”

“And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light.” (Genesis 1:3)

The Bible first speaks of light in Genesis chapter one.

In Genesis 1 God speaks saying, “Let there be light” or “Let light exist”. God creates light at the beginning of time and sets it in the sky to govern the day and night. He shows His creative power and absolute control.

Light is the nature of God. His is light Himself. All light comes from Him. The physical light in His first day of creation reminds us what He does in every heart that loves and trusts Jesus, the true Light.

We do not need to walk in the darkness of sin and death because in Jesus we have the light of life and eternal life. Jesus is the “Light of the World”. (John 8:12)

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Creator God, we thank You for Your creation and help us to remember that You are the Light that shines eternally we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

A Prayer For Direction

“No one could see anyone else or move about for three days. Yet all the Israelites had light in the places where they lived.” (Exodus 10:23)

In the Bible, God as light is mentioned in Exodus 25:37; 27:20; 24:1-18 and Exodus 20:21.

This week as we continue to focus our attention on Jesus’ declaration that He is the Light of the World, you are encouraged to read through these verses asking the Holy Spirit to teach you more about God being described as light.

Exodus 10:23: God is light in the Old Testament in Exodus. Exodus 10:23 tells us that when God’s chosen servant, Moses, led the final judgement on Egypt to end the bondage of the Israelites 10 plagues were sent by God to force Pharaoh to let God’s people go.

The ninth plague was the plague of darkness. Re, the sun-god, was one of the chief deities of Egypt. The plague of darkness should have made them question Re since Egypt was in three days of total darkness and God’s people alone had light in their dwellings.

Exodus 13:21: When the Israelites were escaping the Egyptians, God led the Israelites around by the desert road toward the Red Sea. By day, the Lord went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light so they could travel by day and night. The pillar of cloud came between the armies of Egypt and Israel. Throughout the night, the cloud brought darkness to the one side and light to the other side, so neither went near each other.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear God, help us to realize that in the darkest times of our lives, our praise to You should be the loudest. Let the enemy know we are not afraid of the dark. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Discovering the Light of the World

“He reveals deep and hidden things; he knows what lies in darkness, and light dwells with him.” (Daniel 2:22)

People throughout the Bible believed in the light of God as God. For instance:

Daniel 2:22 reminds us that in praising God Daniel said, “God reveals deep and hidden things. God knows what lies in darkness and light dwells within Him.”

The purpose of the book of Proverbs is to provide godly wisdom to avoid self-destruction. Proverbs 13:9 states, “The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.”

Psalms 119:105 tells us, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

Psalms 18:28 tells us, “You Lord, keep my lamp burning, my God turns my darkness into light.”

John 1:4 tells us, “In him was life, and that life was the light of men.”

Hebrews 1:3-8 tells us “Jesus is the light of the world!”

With so much Biblical evidence that God is the light, we call upon the Holy Spirit to open our hearts and minds to more fully understand that Jesus is the Light of the World.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Lord, may Your Light be a light within me. Help me to believe Jesus is the Light of the World so I can be changed by His Light shining within me – I pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Jesus Came to Take Away the Darkness

“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” (John 12:46)

Light accompanied Jesus at His birth, and it has been with Him and with us ever since. John 12:46 tells us, “I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”

The Bible tells us that at His birth there was a great light shining in the night sky. When Jesus was presented in Jerusalem shortly after His birth, the aged Simeon recognized the child as, “A light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel.” (Luke 2:32)

The Bible also tells us that the light of God that appeared over the manger where Christ was born was the light the shepherds were following when they found Jesus, the Savior of the world, lying in a manger. Later the wise men followed the same light (star).

Decorating our Christmas trees with light and ornaments brings memories of Christmas past. Placing the lighted star at the top of the tree calls us to the One whose birth and life we celebrate.

A familiar hymn for this time of year is, “Star of the East, Oh Bethlehem Star” and as Christians we pray daily that the same light that guided the shepherds and the wise men will guide us as well.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Jesus, guide us with Your light and help us believe You are the Christ, the Light of the world. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Discovering the Lamp that Lights Your Path

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path." (Psalm 119:105)

Beyond the physical element, light in the Bible stands for spiritual illumination and truth. It contains all that is pure, good, and holy as opposed to the darkness of evil.

Psalm 119:105 tells us that, God's Word is, "a lamp for my feet and a light for my path." It lights us in following His commands throughout our lives.

Light is one of the most common and important terms used in the Bible. It refers to both physical light and spiritual light. Physical light is seen with the eyes and can be felt with hands. Spiritual light is seen with the heart and can only be felt by the mind.

In both the Old and New Testament, light is used to describe God's presence and activity. James 1:17 says, "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights." 1 John 5b tells us, "God is light; in him there is no darkness at all." If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the Light, as He is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.

This week as we continue to focus our attention on Jesus, the Light of the World, we ask the Holy Spirit to deepen our faith and to give us the ability to understand more fully how Jesus – the Light of the World – transforms our lives from darkness to light.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear God, help us to "Let your light shine before others, that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven – we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You."

Rejoice and Walk in the Light!

“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

Today we continue to reflect on Jesus’ declaration that He is the Light of the World. As we do, we also reflect on the fact that God has shone His Light to His people throughout the world since the beginning of creation.

So, today, let us rejoice and walk in His Light. Let us reflect the Light of God as the moon reflects the light of the sun. God’s Light never stops coming for us, He beckons us to reflect His Light.

A powerful children’s song, “This Little Light of Mine, I’m Going to Let it Shine” reminds us to be that light of Jesus in the world and to carry God’s gospel in all that we say and do as we reflect on the hymn, “I Saw the Light”.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Jesus, thank You for being the Light of the World. Thank You for “enlightening” our minds with Your Word. Holy Spirit bring Jesus, the Light of the World, into our hearts and help us be transformed by His Light – we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Who Do You Say That I AM?

“Therefore Jesus said again, “Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture.” (John 10:7-9)

This week we will be focusing on Jesus’ declarations that, “I am the door of the sheep” and “I am the good shepherd.”

Shortly before Jesus spoke these words in John, chapter 10, some of the Pharisees were questioning the man healed by Jesus who had been blind from birth (John 9:1 AMPC).

Although the man with new eyesight gave an amazing testimony of Jesus “If this Man were not from God. He would not be able to do anything like this” (John 9:33 AMPC), the Pharisees threw him out of the synagogue.

Jesus first reassured the now seeing man that he was the Son of Man or Son of God and the man confessed, “Lord, I believe!” (John 9:38 AMPC). He then spoke to the Pharisees who lingered nearby and still challenged Jesus’ authority to access God.

This week we will discover the powerful meaning behind Jesus’ unique, divine identity as “the door” for the sheep and “the good shepherd.”

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Daddy God, thank you for this day and for our beloved Savior Jesus! As we focus this week on Jesus’ identity as “the door of the sheep” and “the good shepherd” help us be open to our need for Him and His purposes in our lives – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

How Much Is Too Much?

“All who ever came before Me are thieves and robbers...” (John 10:7)

When Jesus first addressed the Pharisees, He starkly contrasted their attitudes with His. They had carefully questioned the man born blind and his parents, raising doubts that the man had really ever been blind.

They were also challenging Jesus’ authority as a prophet or His ability to heal anyone, let alone on the Sabbath Day! (See John chapter 9).

They promoted themselves as the door to God rather than looking for the true Messiah. By doing so, they were unwilling to relinquish any power over the people’s lives.

Oh, how many times have I been unwilling to give up my own ideas and willful behaviors even when they took me on a road to nowhere but destruction! In the past it was easy to follow religious and other leaders who claim to be a door to heaven with their own ideas.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, protect us from our own best ideas and our wayward following of those who sound good but omit You. You are the One for us to seek after who truly has an abundant life to give – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Did I Hear You Right?

“...but the sheep did not hear them...” (John 10:8)

Wait a minute, Jesus is calling people sheep? Isn't that a little unflattering?

After all, sheep really are the dumbest of four-legged domesticated animals. I know from experiences as a teenager, discovering on my sister and brother-in-law's ranch that those sheep certainly didn't hear me!

They were supposed to go through the gate to get water. I being unskilled in shepherding, thought they would wait patiently for me to open the next gate. After all, the cows and horses always did!

And when they all turned left and headed down the road, they certainly didn't know my voice and listen to directions. Who knew you had to get in front of them to lead them? So through the scratchy stubble fields I ran, until I finally was able to get ahead, and they followed!

I have learned it is true, sheep know the voice of their shepherds and only follow them. This makes it possible even today in the Middle East for several shepherds to mingle their bands at the watering well or in the sheepfold and know for sure theirs will follow them when they call.

Jesus assures us we will know His voice and distinguish it from others. He gives us the discernment to identify His voice over voices of deception. If we truly know God's character, nature, and the history of how He has led others before us, then we will know when something we have heard is something that is in His nature to say. We will know that what He has said does not contradict His Word, wisdom, or common sense.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, help us to draw close to you so we can know Your voice above all the voices and clamor of the world. Thank You for giving us discernment through the Holy Spirit and helping us to avoid the spirit of error as we spend time with You and the Word – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Power For the Future

“I am the door. If anyone enters by me, he will be saved and will go in and out and find pasture.” (John 10:7)

As Jesus described Himself as “the door” not a door, He reminds each of us of the exclusive nature of our salvation. He is not only the Shepherd who leads us into the sheepfold but the only door by which we may enter and be saved (John 3:16).

Keep in mind, sheep are the most helpless of domesticated animals, as well as the dumbest! They can spend their entire day grazing, wandering from place to place, never looking up. So, they often become lost. Unlike other domesticated animals, they don’t even have a built in “homing device” that will help them find their way back. Even if their sheepfold is in plain sight! And by nature, sheep are followers, if one steps off a cliff, the others will follow.

Sheep are also completely helpless against predators. They don’t try to defend themselves by running or spreading out, instead they huddle together and make themselves easily slaughtered.

They are easily frightened, even by running water! Maybe I am seeing a little more clearly why Jesus refers to us humans as sheep! They are totally dependent on their shepherd who tends with care and compassion. Shepherds were providers, guards, protectors, and constant companions. When a shepherd had his sheep out in the countryside during good weather, he enclosed them at night in a rough circle of rocks piled into a wall with a small open space to enter. This required their shepherd to lie across the opening as the door to keep the sheep in and wild animals out. A good shepherd, even a hireling, would lay down his life to protect his sheep.

We live in a world full of predators whose sole intent is to destroy us (1 Peter 5:8 As Jesus described Himself as “the door” not a door, He reminds each of us of the exclusive nature of our salvation. He is not only the Shepherd who leads us into the sheepfold but the only door by which we may enter and be saved (John 3:16).

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, thank You for loving us and protecting us! Thank You for laying down Your life so we can have a life of joy and peace and hope. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for restoring what the enemy has stolen from us and teaching us how to walk in the abundant life. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Our Good Protector

“I am the good shepherd.” (John 10:11)

It has always been fascinating to me that our Lord and Savior identified Himself with the lowest of the low class in the ancient world. How is it He didn't call Himself the good carpenter or good teacher?

Today I believe He presented Himself as the lowest of the low to completely submit to His Father's will. On earth He had no status, no home, yet paid for us the unmeasurable price.

As the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for us all!

When He described Himself as the Good Shepherd, rather than just a shepherd, it is useful to understand the origins of the word we translate as “good.” In Greek, the word is Kalos and means much more than just good. It describes noble, wholesome, good, and beautiful in contrast to that which is wicked, mean, foul, and unlovely.

He acknowledged His inherent goodness, His righteousness, and His beauty as the protector and guide and nurturer of His flock. Remember He is contrasting Himself to the religious leaders of the day who were more concerned with power and prestige than tending to the poor and rescuing the lost sheep.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, thank You for caring so much for each of us that you leave the 99 in order to bring back the one. Thank you for being a good, good God who carefully shepherds us. As those who have been rescued, help us to follow You and care for Your sheep. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

He Laid Down His Life for Us!

“The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep...” (John 10:11)

Shepherds were frequently subjected to grave dangers, even giving their life for their sheep. Jesus came to not just rescue us from worldly predators, but to sacrifice His life for us as He died an excruciating death on the cross!

As fully man and fully God, He is the perfect, unblemished Lamb of God who could pay the true price for sin, death (Romans 6:23).

I am always amazed how God orchestrates details. Jesus is the Good Shepherd and the sacrificial lamb who paid the price for all our sin. He was born in a stable, placed in a manger in Bethlehem where the shepherds tended the lambs raised for sacrifice in the temple.

Those lambs were the temporary payments for our sins, His was the final payment and victory over death as He was raised from the dead! He gave His life for all His sheep while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8) because of His great love for us!

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, thank You for dying for us while we were still broken and lost. Thank You for Your never-ending love for us. Thank You for saving us and giving us new life in You! – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

I Am Known by Him!

“I am the good shepherd; and I know my sheep, and am known by My own.” (John 10:14)

Jesus emphasizes not only does He know His sheep, but also His sheep “know and recognize Me” (John 10:14 AMPC).

Jesus is clear, those who are His sheep will sooner or later be drawn to Him. He also states, “no one is able to snatch them out of My hand” after we confess belief in Him as Lord and Savior. (John 10:28 AMPC)

The revised Amplified Bible clarifies the relationship Jesus’ sheep have with Him: “I am the Good Shepherd, and I know [without any doubt those who are] My own and My own know Me [and have a deep, personal relationship with Me]” (John 10:14 AMP).

Jesus gave me eternal life by acceptance of His grace and mercy as full payment for my sin. If I am truly one of His sheep, I will cultivate a deep and personal relationship with Him. The more I study the Word and let its power flow through my life, the better I am able to hear, discern and obey His voice. I am truly blessed!

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, thank You for knowing each of us and caring enough for us to continue to guide and protect us. Thank You for Your desire for us to know You more intimately. Help us, Lord, to willingly follow and serve You! – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Alive Together with Jesus

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

Throughout this 40-day prayer journey we have studied the I AM statements of Jesus in an effort to more fully understand Jesus’ question found in Matthew 16:13-16 when Jesus asked, “Who do you say I am?” This week we turn our attention to Jesus’ statement found in John 11:25-26 where we hear Him say, “I am the resurrection and the life!”

In this statement, Jesus begins to reveal His identity in an increasingly complex way. When Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life” He is telling us both the spiritual and physical life cannot be separated from Him but are instead aspects of what it means to be in a relationship with Him.

We often forget that to live in relationship with Jesus means we have life in Christ NOW. Jesus told Martha that her brother would rise again (vs 23) He was telling her Lazarus would not have to wait until the final resurrection to live. In the chaos of our world, it is often hard to remember that we too do not have to wait until the end of human history or for the resurrection at the judgement day to enjoy the power of life in Christ.

For, as demonstrated by the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus is all about bringing dead things to life, taking things that are not and making them into things that are. So, do we actually “know” Christ and what living in the power of His resurrection means for our lives? Do we look to other experiences and people to offer us life, or do we turn to Christ? This week let us ponder these questions and remember the truth that those who have trusted in Christ have been made “alive together with him.” (Colossians 2:13)

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, please help us believe and obey Your teachings, and not be misled by doctrines of men that distort the truth. Help us to walk in the Spirit so we may enjoy the power of life in You we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Living by Believing

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

You and I live in a world that downplays absolute truth and rejects the idea that there can be any definitive answers about what happens after we die. For a time, people are content to put off thinking about Jesus’ question, but Jesus will not be ignored and one day we will all face death, so this question is vitally important to all of us. However, when facing questions about death there are many in this world who maintain that it does not matter how you answer Jesus’ question. In fact, many say that it doesn’t matter what you believe as long as you believe in something. Others will say that what you believe is good for you and what they believe is good for them—to each his own.

Nonetheless, there are times in life when it becomes clear that Jesus’ question demands an answer. Times that demand knowing the right answer. Times like when you are lying in the hospital bed not knowing whether or not you will recover from surgery. I recently met a woman who was lying in a hospital bed facing death and when I asked if she knew where she was going if she died, she said, “I hope I am going to heaven.” However, “I hope I am going to heaven” isn’t a good enough answer when we are facing death! We need to be bold in our declaration that we believe Jesus when He said He was the resurrection and the life, when He said He was the “way, the truth, and the life”; because as Jesus said, “No one comes to the Father except through me. “Do you believe this?”

Jesus made quite a bold claim before He asked that all important question. He said: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” Jesus offers what no one else can. He offers the answer to death. He offers forgiveness of sins and eternal life in heaven. He offers a chance to live with Him now and forever. “Do you believe this?”

Jesus’ good friend Martha knew the answer to that question. Her brother had died, yet she found faith and hope in the words of Jesus. Martha believed in her Lord and trusted in Him. She knew the answer to His question. Do you?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: “Lord Jesus, ‘we believe, help our unbelief’ (Mark 9:24). Holy Spirit help us believe in our heart and confess with our mouth that Jesus is the Christ! (Romans 10:9) Help us believe as Martha believed as You draw our hearts closer to Yours we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Do You Believe This?

“...Do you believe this?” (John 11:26)

Outside of Bethany, Lazarus’ sister Martha ran to meet Jesus saying, “If you had been here... my brother would not have died.” Such was her faith in Jesus’ ability to heal! Jesus responded to her faith by assuring her that Lazarus would rise again. Thinking she would have to wait until the end of time to see her brother again Martha replied, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day.” However, that was not the point Jesus was making so he replied to her, “I am the resurrection and life!” Then Jesus called her to faith saying, “He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.” (John 11:21-24)

In this conversation we find there are a few issues Martha is dealing with. For one thing, she has complete confidence in Jesus’ ability to heal, but she is upset that He was not “there” when she needed Him. “If you had been here!” she blurts out. But what Martha forgot was that Jesus knew all about Lazarus’ illness and Jesus knew exactly how and when Martha’s brother would be healed. Also in this passage, the grieving Martha reveals that she considered time an insurmountable obstacle for Jesus. In effect, Martha was saying, “It is too late to help Lazarus (the time is past), so now we must wait (allow more time).”

In His response, Jesus teaches us that neither death nor time is an obstacle for Him. Outside the tomb, “Jesus called out in a loud voice, ‘Lazarus, come forth!’ The dead man came out!” (John 11:43). It is one thing to claim to be the resurrection and the life, but Jesus proved He is these things by raising Lazarus, who had been dead four days.

Jesus’ statement that He is the “resurrection and the life” provides a godly perspective on several spiritual matters including the fact that Martha believed that the resurrection was an event. However, Jesus showed her (and us) that the resurrection is not an event, it is a Person. Jesus taught us that eternal life is not an abstract idea, but rather it is a personal relationship with Him. Victory over death is not only a future expectation; it is a present reality through Jesus Christ. “Do you believe this?” (John 11:26)

How often do we feel like Martha? How often do we cry out to heaven, “Jesus where are You? If You were here, this wouldn’t be happening! Don’t You care?” When life overcomes us and we lash out at Jesus, “Why haven’t You shown up yet?”, we should turn to this passage and remember, Jesus is more powerful than the situation we are facing.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Holy Spirit give us the faith to answer Jesus, “Yes Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God who was to come into the world!” we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Lazarus Come Out!

“Jesus called in a loud voice, “Lazarus, come out!” 44 The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face.” (John 11:43-44)

Following Jesus’ interaction with Martha followed by her sister, Mary, Jesus went to the tomb of Lazarus and ordered the stone to be removed. Jesus reminded Martha again of the call to faith and the glory of God to be on display, which would ultimately culminate in His resurrection from the dead.

After obeying His instruction, Jesus prayed aloud to the Father, and He cried out with a loud voice for Lazarus to come forth. Lazarus indeed came forth out of the tomb alive, and because of this, many of the Jews believed in Jesus, however there were others who did not and choose to simply tell the Pharisees what had occurred.

It is sad for those who merely reported the resurrection to the Pharisees that they could not see the truth. Raising Lazarus from the dead glorified God and pointed them (and us) back to Jesus who is the One with power over death and the grave.

Lazarus’ resurrection demonstrated that Jesus is the Source of resurrection and eternal life. As one author states, “He is the guarantor of our resurrection from the dead.”

Jesus showed the people then and He shows us now that death has no hold over Him. Resurrection and life go together and without Jesus, there is no hope of a resurrection or eternal life with Christ. You see, without Jesus there is only an occupied grave and the stench of death. But through Christ Jesus, there is newness of life and the victorious promise of resurrection.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Father, we are in awe of Your love! It is out of Your love that You sent Your Son Jesus to die the death we all deserve to die, but we won’t because He took our place on the cross. Father, send the Holy Spirit to give us the faith to believe that Jesus is the Christ, Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life, that Jesus is Your one and only Son who came to take away our sins and the sins of the world we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Never underestimate what God can do!

“Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; 26 and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26)

Every revelation of these I AM's that we are studying helps us see more of God's glory. But nearly all of them come through some sense of need. It was to those that were hungry that He said, 'I AM the bread of life'. It was to those who saw their own blindness that He said, 'I AM the light of the world.' It was to the shepherd-less sheep that He said, 'I am the good Shepherd.' And it was in the context of death itself that Jesus said, 'I AM the resurrection and the life'.

Jesus' declaration, "I AM the resurrection and the life." is one of the greatest of the I AM claims of Jesus Christ. But what did Jesus mean by this? Can you remember the time and events that surrounded it? It is a massive claim for anyone to make! If you or I were downtown and someone was yelling out 'I am the resurrection and the life' we would probably think to ourselves 'you are, unfortunately, a nut job!' But like quite a few of the other I AM statements; Jesus backed up His words with action that proved the validity of them.

If you or I said 'I AM the resurrection and the life' how would we back it up? That's right. We would have to raise someone who was truly dead, back to life! For Jesus, that person was of course His well-loved friend Lazarus. And because Jesus backed up His statement with action, we can be assured that His statement is for us as well. Jesus being the resurrection and the life is both a present and a future reality and hope for all who believe in Jesus. The Bible speaks of the resurrection as something that will happen in the future but also something that we can experience now. It speaks of life as something we enter into when we die... but also as a reality and hope for this life as well. As believers in Christ, we rejoice in the gift of eternal life and resurrection that can only come from Jesus Christ. What beautiful words to hear and to understand from our precious Savior, "I am the resurrection and the life."

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Gracious Lord, thank You that the resurrection is both a present reality and a future hope. Give us the faith to believe this miracle of new life in Christ is for us now and in eternity we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

4 Days Late, but Just on Time!

“On his arrival, Jesus found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb for four days...” (John 11:17)

The Bible tells us that four days earlier Jesus received word from Mary and Martha that their brother Lazarus was sick and dying. Upon hearing the news Jesus declared, “This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.” (vs 4) However, Jesus stayed where He was another two days before heading to Bethany.

Often when we hear this part of the story, we are confused about why Jesus didn’t just rush off in haste to heal His beloved friend. For Jesus had the ability, He had the power, He had the authority to heal Lazarus, so why delay so long in going to his rescue that Lazarus died? Jesus tells us the answer in verse 4, “...it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.”

But wait? Did I hear that right, did I read that right, my pain, my suffering, my grief is for God’s glory? What????? Wait????? Why?????

If we stopped reading at verse 4, we would be left perplexed by our questions and never understand the “how” of God’s purpose. Stopping at verse 4 makes the story all about our confusion over Mary and Martha’s suffering, instead of about Jesus. Even going further to verse 21 where Martha says, “Lord...if you had only been here, my brother would not have died.” doesn’t really get to the heart of our questions.

Over the years of wrestling with this story I have come to realize, my questions are about my need to have answers, not about God’s strength or His timing. I have come to realize the things I believe about God in the calm waters of my life need to be the same in the deep darkness of the storms I face. My trust that God knows what will happen in every situation I face, good or bad, needs to be the same no matter what I am facing so that God is the one who is glorified. And just as important, I need to surrender my need to “know” what is going on over to God and trust in His timing for in the end Jesus stood in front of the tomb and cried out, “Lazarus come out!” and he did.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, today we surrender our need to “know” everything over to You. We surrender our questions of “What”, “Wait”, “Why” over to You. Give us strength in the unknown so You may be glorified in all things we pray in Your holy name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

For God so Loved the World ...

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16)

So many times, over the past eight years I have heard words like, "You will see him again, you will see your son again one day." I believe that with all my heart, I do, in fact I'm counting on it! However, the question is "why do I get to see my son again?"

Because his good outweighed his bad? No, that can't be the answer for he was my wild child and his bad definitely outweighed his good. Is it because my good outweighed his bad? No, I can never be good enough to pay the price our son needed for us to see each other again one day.

There is only one reason I will see my son again. That reason is, "16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) That is the promise from God! That is a gift from God! It is a gift to you and to me, it is a gift to my son, it is a gift to his children, his brother, his dad, and everyone else waiting to be with him again someday.

Who are you waiting to see one day? Is it a child, a parent, sibling, cousin, spouse, or friend. Did they know the power and assurance of God's gift of love so strong that it compelled Him to send His Son to die for the sins of the world? Did they know that God's only Son was the resurrection and the life? Do you?

There is one thing about a gift! You have to accept the gift for it to impact your life! I know our son accepted God's gift of His Son because I watched Adrian walk to the cross and surrender his life to Jesus. I am counting on God's promise that He gave His first-born Son so that I can see my first-born son again.

Have you accepted God's gift yet? If not, what are you waiting for? All of us will face death one day. When you do, will you be ready to face it with Jesus – the resurrection and the life – so that you will see all your loved ones who have gone before you into heaven?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Gracious Lord God Almighty, thank You for the gift of Your love. You asked us, "Who do you say that I am?" We want to proclaim to You and the world that You are the Christ, You are the Son of the living God, You are Jesus, the resurrection and the life! Give us the faith to believe and prepare us for the day we will come home to You we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You."

Don't Let Your Hearts be Troubled!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

Who do you say that Jesus is?

Throughout these 40 days of prayer, our challenge is to figure out who you say Jesus is to you. Throughout the next seven days we will dig deeper into the above statement that Jesus made, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

In an effort to refrain from taking this statement out of context, here is what was said by Jesus and Thomas before Jesus made this statement.

John 14:1-6 - “Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father’s house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Lord, please send Your Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding so we may grow deeper in love with You. Help us to let go of our preconceived ideas of who You are and embrace You as the true Savior of us all. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

I AM the Way!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way.” (John 14:6)

Have you ever felt lost?

Have you ever been hiking and realized that you were no longer on the trail?

Everything around you looks the same, it’s getting cold and it’s cloudy and you don’t have a compass. You realize that if you keep walking you could be heading in the completely wrong direction and it’s getting later, and you may have to sleep out under the stars without any tent or sleeping bag. You may feel that way even though you are in your home. You don’t know which way is up anymore. You just want someone to come along and say, follow me, I know the way to safety.

That’s what Jesus is saying, He is the way!! Follow Him!

He will lead you to safety!

He loves you and He wants to spend eternity with you! He prepares the road by traveling it before us and protects us by traveling beside us. When we deviate from His way, He lovingly provides a detour to get us back on track. He promises His constant presence in our daily lives.

As a Jesus-follower, we are granted access to the one and only way to heaven. What an incredible gift to be loved by Him who is the way to such a glorious destination.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Heavenly Father, please guide us on the path You have for each one of us. Give us the faith to believe that You are the only way. Help us to hold onto You with all our strength. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

I AM the Truth!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth.” (John 14:6)

Wow! Truth!

If you listen to social media, truth is whatever you want it to be. $2 + 2 = 5$. The sky is purple, I'm whatever gender I want to be and there are way more than 2 genders. I can marry my dog or whatever, whomever I want. Whatever feels good.

This world needs a reality check! It has become normal for people to use the phrase, “This is my truth.”

But Jesus says that He is Truth!

So, truth is not a feeling, it's not even the answer to a math problem. Truth is a person – Jesus!

What difference does that make in our lives? He is an anchor. He is a rock!

Thank God when there is need for discernment, His Holy Spirit helps us to identify and then abide in His truth. We can depend on Jesus to be the truth in which we are longing.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Jesus, our Truth, please send Your Holy Spirit to us so that we can have discernment in our daily lives. Show us what is truth and what is the lie of the enemy. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

I AM the Life!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life.” (John 14:6) ”

Jesus is life:

In Him, we discover our reason for living.

Undeniably, life includes difficult periods of burden-bearing and cross-carrying. But even in those times...especially in those times, Jesus grants us an unimaginable peace when we place our trust in Him. John 16:33 tells us, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

The life He wants for us is not a “get-through-it-and-just-survive” quality of life. His desire is for us to experience abundant life. By using our unique God-given gifts to share about the victorious life that is offered to all who go to Him in repentance and love. We are fulfilling His purpose for our lives. Acts 20:24 says, “However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me—the task of testifying to the good news of God’s grace.” Friends, Jesus is the life. He is ALL we need!

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, Friend of sinners, thank you for giving us new life in You! Please help us to remember that even through tough things, You are still filling us with abundant love, faith and joy.

We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

One Way – Means – One Way!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

“No one comes to the Father except through me.” The Greek word for “No one” is: οὐδείς -ὸς, ὅ, (oudeis), it is an adjective meaning “No one, nothing”. Therefore, there is no other way to heaven except by believing in Jesus Christ, because it’s a free gift solely offered by Him.

This idea is not a popular idea these days. People want to believe that being a “good” person will get them into heaven; or being “spiritual” will get them into heaven. But according to Jesus, the only way to heaven and eternal life is through Him. He IS our salvation!

This was the answer to the doubt of Thomas. To receive the Truth and the Life revealed in the presence of the Son is to come to the Father by the only Way. Here Jesus claims beyond a shadow of a doubt that He is the only way to know God the Father. No other path can bring us to the throne of the King of creation.

Only in and through Jesus can we know the spiritual truth about our lives and our world—and have abundant life.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Holy Spirit, work in our hearts today. Help us to trust in Jesus as “the Way and the Truth and the Life.” Help us to live with confidence because of who He is. We pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Jesus is the Way

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

I started paying closer attention to Christianity in the mid 1970’s. I became a teenager early in that decade, and the faith that others had shared with me became a personal adventure as I grew. I remember way back then seeing the cover of a contemporary translation of the Bible called “The Way”. It was “mod”, trendy, as it attempted to engage a younger generation in God’s Word.

When I read some of the New Testament for myself, I discovered that in the Acts of the Apostles, the first followers of Jesus had called their movement “the Way.” Maybe a holdover from when Jesus told His disciples: “I AM the way and the truth and the life.”

As I have walked this Christian life, I have tried to make the Way of Jesus my way. I have read how Jesus turned to God both day and night for guidance and conversation. I need to do that more often. I have read how Jesus lived His life for others, loving them wholeheartedly. I need to do that more often.

What do you need to do more often to more fully believe and understand that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Lord Jesus, help me to walk each day in the way that brings You glory. Thank You for sharing the truth with us in Your Word, so that our lives can be rich and full as we follow You we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Yes, It is that Simple!

“Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” (John 14:6)

As I come to the last day of devotions regarding John 14:6, I realize that maybe you are reading this passage and wondering how someone comes to the Father through Jesus.

Paul answers this question in Romans 10 verse 9. It says: “If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

Yes, it is that simple.

Jesus did all the work for our salvation!

All we are required to do is for us to declare with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts that God raised Him from the dead.

Now, walking each day in this salvation is both rewarding and at the same time, a struggle as we contend with our old nature. However, praise God 1st John 1:9 promises us that “if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When we sin God graciously and amazingly forgives us.

Thank the Lord, we are given the Holy Spirit to assist us in our daily struggle. May you walk right next to Jesus, holding His hand and letting Him guide you.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Lord, please send Your Holy Spirit to give us wisdom and understanding so we may grow deeper in love with You. Help us to let go of our preconceived ideas of who You are and embrace You as the true Savior of us all we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

I AM the True Vine

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:1–5)

This week we turn our attention to Jesus’ statement that, “I am the true vine and My Father is the vinedresser.” (John 15:1)

Jesus declares this of Himself on the night He was betrayed, just prior to going to Gethsemane. Jesus knows what is coming! He knows the garden, the arrest, beatings, trials, the whipping, the crown of thorns – the CROSS – were coming! Yet, Jesus took time to give counsel to His disciples instructing them to make sure they remained connected to Him because Jesus also knew the Sunday resurrection was coming as well.

As we walk through this week with Jesus, focusing on Jesus being the vine and His Father being the vinedresser, let us pray for the Holy Spirit to strengthen our relationship with Jesus – the true vine that gives us life.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Dear Jesus, You are the true vine and we are supposed to remain in You. What does that mean? What does that look like for us in this time in history? Jesus, send the Holy Spirit to keep us connected to You we pray in Jesus holy name. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Our Grace Filled Father

“I am the true vine...” (John 15:1a)

We live in a world where technology abounds. Social media interconnects us in ways new in all human history. With the onset of the Internet, we are just milliseconds away from those who live in the world.

Yet a simple Google search will show that most people suffer from loneliness. It is at epidemic levels, maybe greater than anytime in human history. Something is missing.

Yet Jesus tells us that in Him we share something that is rich and fruitful, interconnecting us in ways I am sure we do not fully understand.

We could probe the meaning of this statement, Jesus is the “true vine”, but never truly grasp the depths of its meaning.

For the next few days, we will together contemplate, maybe only at a surface-level, what it means to us and how Jesus can impact our lives. So together let’s prayerfully look at this amazing statement together. As we prayerfully look at this together, keep in mind Jesus’ question to Peter and the other disciples, “who do you say that I am?” (Luke 9:20).

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Grace-filled Father, Your ways are higher than our ways and your understand higher than heavens are above the earth. Help me to understand in a meaningful way, the mean and purpose of this passage. Throughout this week, plant Your word deep in my heart and soul. And like Peter, help me to recognized You as my Lord and Savior. In the wonderful and powerful name of Jesus, the risen Lord. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Jesus, our Provision

“I am the vine, you are the branches.” (John 15:5a)

We tend to want to make it on our own. We get this honestly. In the West, we inherit a strong sense of rugged individualism. But we are not created to be self-sufficient.

In the Old Testament there are a number of passages describing Israel as the vine, planted and tended by God. Yet, as people often do, Israel tried to make it on their own apart from God. As history tells us, they failed miserably. And the result was “bad fruit.” On their own, they struggled. It is against this backdrop that Jesus tells us that, “I am the true vine.”

We were never meant to do this on our own. We need God who is our provider.

In Genesis 22:14, Abraham was about to sacrifice his son Isaac and as the knife was about to take the young man’s life, a ram was caught in the thicket. Abraham coined the phrase, Jehovah Jireh, my Provider. Little did He know that not only would God provide a ram sparing Abraham’s son, but God would later provide His Son, on that very mountain, not only freeing Abraham and Isaac, but all humanity from their sin.

Jesus is our provision. Like the grapevine gives life to the branches, Jesus gives us life, in abundance (see John 10:10). He is the true vine, the true source of life for believers.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Holy Father, our Provider, thank You for the gift of Your Son. I cannot even begin to imagine the cost. Yet you gave so that we could have life in abundance. There are no words to express our gratitude. Help me to see how rich and wonderful are the gifts You freely offer. Help me never to take this for granted. But may it produce the fruit of authentic worship in my life. May the True Vine work out His purposes in my life. In the name my Savior and Lord. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Who is the True Vinedresser?

“He who abides in Me, and I in him...” (John 15:5b)

The context of this passage is Jesus’ Upper Room discourse.

This is the last night before Jesus would be crucified. Jesus wanted His disciples to be prepared, readying for the next very difficult hours. They will face His arrest, crucifixion and death.

Sunday is coming, but the night will get a lot darker before the light will break through.

Facing His death, Jesus’ words are pregnant with meaning.

Two-thousand years later, we can take His words to heart. But what does it mean to abide in Christ Jesus. Even though we cannot see Jesus, we too abide in Him. To abide means to live, continue, or remain.

In Romans, Paul tells us that there is “no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). Quite literally, Paul is instructing his readers to remain, to put their trust in Jesus. In Christ, we find life and freedom.

This is as true today as it was in that difficult time facing the disciples. “I am with you always,” Jesus said, “even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20b). We can hold on to this promise knowing He is Immanuel (God with us).

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Father, You are the God who is present. You have promised to be with us even to the end of the age. Upon this promise I can trust You are with me even in the darkest times of my life. Like the disciples, facing the darkest night in history, the resurrection of your Son shows us that Sunday is coming. Help me no matter what I may be facing now or anytime in my life to know and trust that You are always with me. Thank You, Lord, my Immanuel. In Jesus holy name. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

My Father is the Vinedresser

“My Father is the vinedresser.” (John 15:1b)

Jesus refers to His Father as the “vinedresser.” In many passages in the Old Testament God is referred to as the vine grower. A vinedresser is a farmer or gardener who would trim back the branches promoting the health and growth of the vine. The Father trims the things in our lives that inhibit growth and health. He wants to ensure that our lives are fruitful as He transforms us into the likeness of His Son.

At times that might prove to be difficult and even painful. But the Father’s work is based in His love for us. He provides us all good gifts. Paul describes this work in 2 Timothy, as His word transforms us. This transformation cuts into us deeply.

Paul writes, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16–17.) Or in Hebrews we read, “12For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)

For what purpose? “For every good work.” The Word of God is transformational. There we hear the voice of God, calling us into His light and out of the darkness, leaving no stone unturned.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Almighty God, King of the Universe, Your Word is holy. Allow Your Word to become a spring flowing up within me. John tells us that Jesus is the Word, and all things were created by Him. Amazingly, He became flesh and dwelt among us. Jesus promised me the Holy Spirit. May the fruit of Your good gifts and the work of Your Holy Spirit produce fruit in my life, daily. And may that fruit shine Your light into my community, to my friends and family, and to my neighbors. May Your light shine through me to those You have put into my path this week and every day of my life. Use me to share Your goodness to a world trapped in darkness, so that others may come to a saving knowledge of the Jesus whom I have come to know as my Savior and Lord. I pray this in the name of the risen Lord, Jesus Christ. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Bearing Fruit

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Innovation has played an important role in our lives. Often, we have taken it for granted.

For example, we have had the conveniences of electricity in our modern day for so long, many tend not to give it much thought. But without electricity many of technologies like light would not be possible.

Likewise, it is God’s presence in our lives that is essential to a fruitful life.

As we abide in Christ, He works in and through us for His good purposes. We could not bear fruit without His life-giving presence and activity. In Psalm 90:1, called the Prayer of Moses, we read: “1 Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.” The verb here is in the present perfect continuous tense, “You have been,” indicating an action in the past continuing up to now.

God has always been with you and will always be with you. You can count on His presence. He is your dwelling place now and forever. Trust and rely on Him and you will bear much fruit.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Gracious and Abiding Father, help me to abide in Your Spirit, that I may bear much fruit. Work on my heart so that Your fruit will be rich in my life. Help me to see others and their needs and use me as You will. In the mighty name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”

Walking in the Sprit

"He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit..." (John 15:5b)

Not all fruit is created equal.

You know right away when you bite into a bad apple. You know the ones that are dry, almost gritty in texture. It is not as satisfying as a crisp sweet apple full of favor.

There is such a thing as bad fruit.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul encourages us to walk in the Spirit. The fruit produced in our lives by the Holy Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23).

This is God's work in us.

The last night before Jesus was taken away and crucified, He told His disciples, "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4).

But on our own, we can do nothing. We are to abide in Him. Remember, to abide in Jesus is to continue or remain in Him.

As we look at these "I Am" passages, keep in mind, the Living God, the Creator of the universe, wants a deep and abiding relationship with you.

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Holy Father, Lord the Giver of life, thank You for Your good gifts. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit. Please raise up faith in me that I may manifest the fruit of the Spirit. Let me not become complacent. But use me as You will. Transform me into the likeness of Your Son. That others may see Your good works. Keep me in Your good graces each day, I pray. In the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ. – Amen.

Personal Prayer: "Lord Jesus, You ask – "Who do you say that I am?" Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You."

Who Do You Say that I Am?

“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” (Matthew 16:13-16)

As we come to the close of our forty days of prayer, I pray we have found our covenant God to be a faithful promise keeper. I pray we have been given the faith to answer Jesus’ question, “Who do you say that I am?” the way Peter did, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!”

When Jesus asked His disciples “Who do you say I am?”, it was like a lightbulb went on in Peter’s brain. Through the power of the Holy Spirit Himself, Peter was able to correctly identify Jesus as His Messiah. What an incredible gift!

Recognizing the true identity of Jesus still has fantastic consequences for us today. When we acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, long-awaited Messiah who is our Immanuel – Our God who is with us – and we submit to His lordship in our lives, we are saved from our sins.

Today, Jesus is still asking us, “Who do you say I am?” What do we answer? Do we still simply believe that Jesus is a good man, prophet, or teacher? Or do we recognize that Jesus is the Christ?

As we explored the 7-I AM statements Jesus made about Himself and sought to answer Jesus’ question to us, “Who do you say that I am?” I pray the Holy Spirit gave us the same faith He gave Peter who said, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” I pray we too came to understand Jesus is the Christ, the One who had been expected for thousands of years by the Jewish people. For Jesus is the Deliverer sent by God to redeem His people. He is the anointed One, the Chosen One, the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Very Word of God, who is the Lion of Judah, the Prince of Peace, our Wonderful Counselor. The Way. The Truth. The Life. The Messiah.

So, who do you say that He is?

Notes:

Prayer for the Day: Gracious and ever-loving Father, thank You for loving us, forgiving us, and giving us the faith we need to declare Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, we pray in Jesus name – Amen.

Personal Prayer: “Lord Jesus, You ask – “Who do you say that I am?” Lord, open my mind so I can understand who You are, and who I am in You.”