



SHILOH
A.M.E. ZION
CHURCH

LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE

40 DAYS OF LENT

A DEVOTIONAL TO PREPARE FOR EASTER

**“THEN JESUS, CALLING OUT
WITH A LOUD VOICE, SAID,
'FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS
I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!'
AND HAVING SAID THIS
HE BREATHED HIS LAST.”**

JOHN 19:30

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Unless otherwise noted, Scriptures are taken from
the Holy Bible, English Standard Version.

AN INVITATION (2 / 1 7)	9
A GREAT PROMISE (2 / 1 8)	10
PROTECT THE HOUSE . (2 / 1 9)	11
OUTWARD VS. INWARD . (2 / 2 0)	12
OUR EVERY THIRST (2 / 2 2)	13
DROWNING THE DOUBT (2 / 2 3)	14
THE KINGDOM IS HERE, (2 / 2 4)	15
NOW WHAT? .(2/25)	15
FEAR TO FREEDOM (2/26)	16
A LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE (2/27)	17
APPROACHING HUMBLLY . (2 / 2 8)	18
PEACE! BE STILL(3/1)	19
CHRIST > CHAOS (3/2)	20
POWER OVER SIN & DEATH (3/3)	21
FAITH & FRIENDSHIP (3/4)	22
RIGHT HERE (3 / 5)	23
ORDINARY DREAM TEAM (3/6)	24
IS HE REALLY THE ONE? (3 / 7)	25
A MOVEMENT (3 / 8)	26
BASED ON HOPE (3 / 9)	26
WORTHY OF IT ALL (3/10)	27
GO (3 / 1 1)	28
GRACIOUS MERCY (3 / 1 2)	29
BRINGING LITTLE, (3/13)	30
GAINING MUCH (3 / 1 4)	30
COURAGE IN CHRIST (3 / 1 5)	31
ANCHORED & (3/16)	32
APPROACHABLE (3/17)	32
THE OPPORTUNITY (3/18)	33
OF SUFFERING (3/19)	33
WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? (3/20)	34
DESTINY DELIVERED (3 / 2 1)	35
TRUE GREATNESS (3/22)	36
THE LOST SHEEP (3/23)	37
LIVING WITH THE (3/24)	38
END IN MIND (3/25)	38
UNLIKED & SAVED (3/26)	39
HOSANNA! (3 / 2 7)	40
COMING AGAIN (3 / 2 8)	41
A PRAYER FOR UNITY. (3 / 2 9)	42
ON THE CROSS. (3 / 3 0)	43
A DESPERATE REQUEST (3/31)	44
A FINAL BREATH (4/1)	45
WHEN THE SUN (4 / 2)	46
STOPPED SHINING (4/3)	46
TORN IN TWO 4/4)	47
THEY SAW	48

HOPE IS ALIVE

40 DAYS OF LENT

Can you imagine being in the crowd

on the day Jesus was crucified? Can you imagine the emotions? The questions? The pain? The agony of watching God's Son die on a cross?

But then! Can you imagine hearing the news that the tomb was empty? Close your eyes and breathe that in for a minute. The tomb, once the resting place of Jesus' body, was empty.

Our hope is alive!

WHY 40 DAYS OF LENT?

40 DAYS OF LENT

For hundreds of years, Christians have been

participating in Lent. Lent has traditionally been a time to prepare our hearts for Easter by fasting, praying, and repenting of sin as we get ready to celebrate the death and resurrection of Jesus.

You've probably heard of Lent before—you may have even participated in it before. But it's not just an empty tradition or a meaningless ritual. Christians all over the world observe Lent as a way of removing clutter from our lives so that we can see Jesus more clearly during Easter.

So, traditionally, people who practice Lent give something up in order to spend more time in prayer. What you fast from could be just about anything—food, TV, social media, or even choosing to drink only water. As we remove physical things from our lives for this period of 40 days, it can help us focus on the deeper parts of ourselves that are redeemed and made whole by the truth of the gospel.

To help you focus on Jesus in this season of Lent, this daily devotional consists of a Scripture reading, a small devotional thought, and a daily challenge. Our hope is that by the end of these 40 days you will have a better understanding of Jesus' life, death, resurrection, and what He means for all of us.

Our hope is alive! Together, let's focus on that for the next 40 days and see what God will do to get our hearts ready to see Jesus clearly.

AN INVITATION

Daily Scripture Reading: John 1:35-42

"Jesus turned and saw them following and said to them, 'What are you seeking?' And they said to him, 'Rabbi' (which means Teacher), 'where are you staying?' He said to them, 'Come and you will see...'"

JOHN 1:38-39

As this season of Lent begins, we must ask ourselves, *"What am I seeking?"* Jesus asked these two disciples this straightforward question. Their answer was far from profound, but Jesus still gave them a simple invitation. *"Come and see."* This invitation began a journey of radical transformation, but it all started with an honest answer to a heart-revealing question. *What are you seeking?*

TODAY

Take a moment to pause and reflect—what have you been seeking? Will you commit to seek Jesus for the next 40 days and accept His invitation to come and see the hope of the world? Pray, *"Jesus help me to seek You first today."*

A GREAT PROMISE

Daily Scripture Reading: John 1:43-51

“The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, ‘Follow me.’”

JOHN 1:43

Have you ever been extended an invitation? Invitations come in all shapes and sizes through every form of media we have at our disposal—from casual conversations in office hallways to beautiful formal invitations that arrive in our mailboxes. With every invitation comes an ebb and flow of anticipation and excitement. In John 1, an invitation is made with two simple words: *“Follow Me.”* This is an extraordinary invitation extended to very ordinary people, and it comes with a promise as Jesus says in verse 50, *“You will see greater things than these.”*

TODAY

Jesus extends the same invitation to you: *“Follow Me.”*
What can you put aside today to experience life in the footsteps of Jesus?

PROTECT THE HOUSE

Daily Scripture Reading: John 2:12-25

"His disciples remembered that it was written, 'Zeal for your house will consume me.'"

JOHN 2:17

The dictionary defines zeal as "fervor for a person, cause, or object." The word itself is synonymous with the feelings, expressions, and experiences of intense passion. Zeal can be found in the blazing heat of our emotions when, try as we may, we cannot resist reacting in the moment. Zeal cannot and does not take a passive posture or sit idle when action is demanded.

The Bible calls us 'God's temple'. And Jesus is just as zealous for us as He was for the Temple in John 2. When it comes to your heart, your soul, and your life, you will find no passivity in Him. He **WILL** protect His house.

TODAY

Know that you are recklessly and relentlessly pursued and protected by the Author and Creator of all things. Live and walk this day in the knowledge that the King of kings is consumed by His passion and desire for you. Where do you see this truth in your life?

OUTWARD VS. INWARD

Daily Scripture Reading: John 3:1-21

*“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,
that whoever believes in him should not perish
but have eternal life.”*

JOHN 3:16

Nicodemus was a Pharisee, someone known for keeping the Jewish Law to the letter. Though Pharisees followed God outwardly, they tended to miss the heart behind His instructions. Jesus even called them “whitewashed tombs” (Matthew 23:27). In John 3, Jesus explains to Nicodemus that God isn’t concerned with appearances—He looks for what’s inside. He looks for faith in His Son.

TODAY

Examine your heart. Do you ever feel like you’re trying to earn your standing with God? Consider what Jesus says He can do: bring light, make us clean, and give us new life. All He asks of us is to turn to Him.

OUR EVERY THIRST

Daily Scripture Reading: John 4:3-42

"...but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

JOHN 4:14

You may think you know a little bit about the Samaritan woman, but, more than likely, you are actually a lot like the Samaritan woman. We feel avoided, rejected, or we assume our sin makes us unlovable. Like her, we find ourselves at an empty well trying to fill our innermost needs with things that cannot satisfy. But Jesus knew the Samaritan woman's sin and her needs. *And He knows ours.* He meets us at our loneliest hour and in our deepest thirst.

TODAY

Whenever you encounter water—getting a drink, doing the dishes, or washing your hands—take a moment and thank Jesus for being your living water, fulfilling every need. Bask in the awesome reality that Jesus sees you and loves you.

DROWNING THE DOUBT

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 3:19-20

"But Herod the tetrarch, who had been reprov'd by him for Herodias, his brother's wife, and for all the evil things that Herod had done, added this to them all, that he locked up John in prison."

LUKE 3:19-20

John the Baptist knew that time was short. He had preached, taught, baptized, and called people to repent of their sins. He pointed them to Jesus. But he also told the truth about Herod's affair with his brother's wife. The punishment? John the Baptist was thrown into a dark, damp prison cell beneath Herod's palace. He knew that death probably awaited him. Probably soon.

Alone in that cell, John needed a word from Jesus to drown his doubt. And Jesus did not rebuke John for doubting. Rather, He sent a promise that would sustain John through his darkest days.

TODAY

Jesus still gives hope for the broken and the doubting. Will you take your doubt to Jesus? Will you believe what you know to be true and trust Him with the rest?

THE KINGDOM IS HERE, NOW WHAT?

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 1:14-15

"...The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

MARK 1:15

Jesus triumphantly emerges from 40 days in the wilderness to proclaim the long anticipated inauguration of the eternal and indestructible Kingdom of God. The establishment of God's Kingdom on earth marks the beginning of freedom, victory, and hope for God's people.

When we actively believe this truth, it beckons us to a place of repentance, turning from our sin and looking toward Christ. Entrusting our lives to Him binds the enemy's hold on our lives and claims the victory for Christ.

TODAY

Come out of hiding and confess your sin honestly before Jesus. After doing that, prayerfully proclaim this promise over your sin: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

FEAR TO FREEDOM

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 5:1-11

"...Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.' And when they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed him."

LUKE 5:10-11

Think about the last time you felt unworthy. Were you at work, in your home, or before God? Simon Peter felt this very emotion. Oftentimes we can find ourselves telling God, *"I don't deserve you. Don't you recognize how many mistakes I've made?"* Knowing our sin, we sometimes live in shame, missing Jesus' response. But don't stop there! Jesus said, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men." He spoke against the fear in Simon's heart and invited him to join His ministry. They had work to do!

TODAY

It is time to leave fear behind and begin fishing for people. Share this story with someone today and see how God brings hope in place of our fear.

A LOVE FOR ALL PEOPLE

Daily Scripture Reading: John 4:46-54

“Jesus said to him, ‘Go; your son will live.’ The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and went on his way.”

JOHN 4:50

The man who came to Jesus for help was an official in the court of Herod. The Jews in the crowd saw Herod’s court as antithetical to everything they believed in—it was known for violence, murder, and tyranny. When Jesus said, “Go; your son will live,” the man immediately believed and went on his way. The boy was healed, and the Jews of Galilee saw that God’s love extends to ALL who seek it. Even those in Herod’s court!

TODAY

Think about someone in your life who is far from God’s grace. Pray that God will draw them to Himself, and ask Him to make you an instrument of His love.

APPROACHING HUMBLLY

Daily Scripture Reading: Matthew 8:1-4

"And behold, a leper came to him and knelt before him, saying, 'Lord, if you will, you can make me clean.' And Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, 'I will; be clean...'"

MATTHEW 8:2-3

The leper in this passage had known extreme suffering and isolation in his life, so he came to Jesus with desperation. He didn't just passively ask for healing—he prostrated himself and acknowledged the power of Jesus. His words showed his utter dependence on Jesus, because that's all he had left!

TODAY

Come to Jesus with humility and desperation. Don't just say another prayer like normal. Instead, passionately seek after Him and acknowledge that He is the Keeper of all good things.

PEACE! BE STILL.

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 4:35-41

"And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace! Be still.' And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, 'Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?'"

MARK 4:39-40

The disciples would never forget that day. They were in deep water when a violent storm came without warning. These fishermen knew the danger, and they were afraid. But not Jesus. He slept, unfazed by thunder, lightning, and the churning and tilting of the boat. This storm was not outside His control.

It's easy to forget—nothing that happens to us is news to Jesus! He knows, He cares, and He is saying, "Peace! Be still."

TODAY

What do you fear? Sickness? The loss of your dreams? Life alone? Take your fears to Jesus. He is the only One who can still the storm within.

CHRIST > CHAOS

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 5:1-20

“And they came to Jesus and saw the demon-possessed man, the one who had had the legion, sitting there, clothed and in his right mind, and they were afraid.”

MARK 5:15

One of the lies that we sometimes believe is that in times of chaos, there is no hope. Did you catch the chaos that this demon-possessed man and the whole region had experienced? *No one* could bind him. *No one* had the strength to subdue him. Then Jesus—the hope of the world—dispels all chaos with a few brief words, returning hope to this man as a child of God.

TODAY

Will you come running to the feet of Jesus and let Him bring hope into the midst of your chaos? Read Psalm 3:1-8 and pray that you may find hope in God alone.

POWER OVER SIN & DEATH

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 5:21-43

*"...Daughter, your faith has made you well;
go in peace and be healed of your disease."*

MARK 5:34

Neighbors told neighbors and friends told friends how Jesus healed the sick and made the blind see. People desperate for a miracle followed Jesus everywhere. Jairus and a woman who had suffered for 12 years heard about this healing. Two desperate people begged for miracles, and Jesus met their needs.

We pray for miracles in our own lives. If we wrote our own stories, we might skip the chapters on suffering and loss. Yet, so often that's the very place where Jesus shows His power.

TODAY

Will you trust God to write your story? He loves you more than you can imagine. Jesus suffered death on a cross to bring you eternal healing! In the Kingdom of God, the suffering are comforted, hearts are mended, and new life takes the place of death. Write down some of the ways God has changed your story for the better.

FAITH & FRIENDSHIP

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 5:17-26

*"And when he saw their faith, he said,
'Man, your sins are forgiven you.'"*

LUKE 5:20

Have you ever had a friend care for you so much that his or her faith carried you through a hard time? Have you ever been that friend to someone else?

In today's Scripture some men carried their friend—paralyzed, hopeless, and desperate for healing—to see Jesus. When they couldn't find a way, they dug a hole through the roof to lower their friend to Jesus! That required strong faith and strong friendship. And Jesus recognized that.

TODAY

If you know of someone whose situation seems hopeless, be the friend whose faith can carry them to Jesus. Stop and pray for them. Send a text to let them know they aren't without hope. If you're the one feeling hopeless, reach out to a friend and ask them to pray for you.

RIGHT HERE

Daily Scripture Reading: John 5:2-15

"Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk.'"

JOHN 5:8

For 38 years, day in and day out an invalid prayed the same thing. *"Help me."* After a while, these words started to become a hopeless mantra. He had been rejected for so many years, left to suffer alone. Then Jesus came to him as he was broken and desperate. The Lord asked, "Do you want to get well?" The man didn't even know who He was, yet Jesus mercifully healed him.

TODAY

Jesus meets us where we are, broken and desperate. He brings us healing and hope. Today, recognize who He is and thank Him for making you whole and holy!

ORDINARY DREAM TEAM

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 6:12-16

“And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.”

LUKE 6:13

Jesus, the Messiah, prayed before choosing His 12 disciples. They were hardly the elite—some fisherman, a tax collector, an accountant, a scholar. They were fast asleep while Jesus faced arrest. As He was beaten and condemned in a mock trial, they hid. They denied Him; He suffered on a cross for them. Yet *none* of this disqualified them from serving Jesus! After His resurrection, Jesus called them back, empowering them to spread the Gospel.

TODAY

Jesus calls us to be His disciples. He teaches, mentors, and promises to journey with us. Have you left everything to follow Him? Will you put Him first? Will you listen and obey today?

IS HE REALLY THE ONE?

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 7:18-23

"In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. And he answered them, 'Go and tell John what you have seen...'"

LUKE 7:21-22

A bold preacher, John the Baptist, sends some messengers to ask Jesus a bold question. *"Are you the One?"* Even after baptizing Jesus and hearing God declare that Jesus was His Son, John still asked the question. This question came after two years in prison. Two years to wonder and doubt. The bottom line is, John lost some of his hope. Jesus responded, not with backlash or a gasp of betrayal, but with words of hope.

TODAY

You might be in a place just like John. Maybe you're in a tough situation that has been going on for what seems like forever. You need to ask a bold question to Jesus. Go ahead—ask it! He can handle it, and He will answer it with hope.

A MOVEMENT BASED ON HOPE

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 8:1-3

“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities...”

LUKE 8:1-2

What caused a group of women to leave their lives behind

just to support this Man called Jesus? The answer: a radical encounter with this very Man that changed their lives forever. Mary Magdalene had seven demons removed from her life. Many had diseases cured just like that! In a day when women were often marginalized and left out, Jesus met them with hope. Their response? Going all-in so others could experience the life-changing movement of Jesus.

TODAY

Look back and consider what Jesus has already done in your life. Then think forward and answer this question, “How am I getting behind the movement of Jesus so that others can experience His life-changing work?”

WORTHY OF IT ALL

Daily Scripture Reading: Matthew 13:44-52

"...The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls, who, on finding one pearl of great value, went and sold all that he had and bought it."

MATTHEW 13:45-46

Today's passage is from a collection of parables that serves as a window into who Christ is and how He shapes us to be like Him. As we read, a beautiful picture of the Christian life begins to unfold. The first two parables liken the Kingdom of Heaven to a treasure and a pearl worthy of devotion and pursuit. The responses of both the man and the merchant reveal a profound truth that we cannot miss: When we believe Christ and see His kingdom for what it really is, the natural overflowing response is to pursue Him with our whole lives.

TODAY

Read the last two parables in this passage again. What might be keeping you from believing that Jesus and His Kingdom alone are enough for you to completely surrender to Him?

Day
20

GO

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 9:1-6

*“...And he sent them out to proclaim
the kingdom of God and to heal.
And he said to them, ‘Take nothing for your journey...’”*

LUKE 9:2-3

God gives us only one life to live. A life that glorifies God goes out and proclaims the Kingdom of God and does not worry about unnecessary material things. This kind of life doesn't just pass idly by and eventually pass away—this kind of life strives to make an eternal difference!

TODAY

Think about the abilities and resources that God has given you. Make a list of the ways you can actively go and proclaim the Kingdom of God.

GRACIOUS MERCY

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 6:14-29

"...Jesus' name had become known. Some said, 'John the Baptist has been raised from the dead. That is why these miraculous powers are at work in him.'"

MARK 6:14

Herod was both aggravated by and fascinated with

John the Baptist. He liked to listen to John teach, but he struggled with his words and failed to face his sin. He thought throwing John into a dark prison cell under his palace would silence him.

John's life ended one gruesome night when Herod's daughter asked for his head on a platter. It was a horrible death for a faithful prophet, but Jesus showed that John's ministry was not in vain, and He made a way to defeat death for all who are faithful to Him.

TODAY

Will you tell someone how Jesus has redeemed and restored your life? Or maybe you're not quite there yet. Maybe you're holding onto something from the past and it just won't let up. Are you willing to release it to Him today?

BRINGING LITTLE, GAINING MUCH

Daily Scripture Reading: John 6:1-15

“Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted.”

JOHN 6:11

In our passage today we find Jesus and His disciples confronted by a massive crowd. In the middle of nowhere they approached, after walking all night to find healing. They had major expectations. And the disciples had major problems. How were they supposed to feed these people?

With five loaves, two fish, and a prayer, everyone had plenty to eat and there were 12 full baskets left in the end. God multiplies what little we bring forward and does more than we can imagine for His glory.

TODAY

Life can be hectic. It's so easy to see problems and hard to find solutions. Today, spend some time in prayer, asking God to take control of your life and to multiply His blessings in spite of your circumstances.

COURAGE IN CHRIST

Daily Scripture Reading: John 6:16-21

"When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the sea and coming near the boat, and they were frightened. But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.'"

JOHN 6:19-20

Do not be afraid. That's one of the Bible's most commonly repeated phrases. God reassures us because He knows we're prone to fear. The unbelievable sight of a figure walking on water in the darkness causes the disciples, seasoned fishermen, to quake in terror. But when Jesus identifies Himself, He calms their fears and restores their courage.

TODAY

Think about how you would see your current fears and worries if Jesus were sitting right beside you. Remember that those who are in Christ have the Spirit of God with them at all times! Trusting this, thank God that He is right beside you fighting your battles.

ANCHORED & APPROACHABLE

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 6:53-56

"...When they got out of the boat, the people immediately recognized him and ran about the whole region and began to bring the sick people on their beds to wherever they heard he was."

MARK 6:54-55

When Jesus reached the shore of the lakeside town, Gennesaret, the whole region responded by running out to meet Him. Word had spread that this Healer was anchored and approachable. Like them, we can have confidence that the Jesus of that moment is the same in this moment—anchored and approachable.

TODAY

Take a moment and write down everything you need to take to Jesus in prayer. He is an anchor ready to receive it all.

THE OPPORTUNITY OF SUFFERING

Daily Scripture Reading: John 9:1-7

“Jesus answered, ‘It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.’”

JOHN 9:3

Jesus’ healing of the blind man reveals important truths about our own suffering and our response to the suffering of others. Jesus made clear that the man’s blindness was not a result of his own sin or the sins of his parents. Rather, our anguish serves as a beckoning to come to the end of ourselves so we can more fully trust and depend on Christ. Here, we learn that both suffering and healing are opportunities for refinement—a refinement that leads us to display the glory of God.

TODAY

Take time out of your day to identify the suffering in your life. Put a name to it. Write it down. Talk to Jesus about it. He can handle your honesty.

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

Daily Scripture Reading: Matthew 16:13-19

"Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?'"

MATTHEW 16:13

Jesus wasn't questioning the disciples because He was insecure and in need of affirmation or encouragement. This question went far deeper than that. Peter answers by affirming that He is *"the Christ, the son of the living God."* (v. 16) Jesus responds with a resounding Yes! and goes on to proclaim that not even the gates of Hell are powerful enough to prevail against this truth.

So what? Why is this so important? Because what we believe to be true about Jesus will determine how we live every moment of every day.

TODAY

Set aside 30 minutes and ask yourself the same question Jesus asked Peter. Who do you say Jesus is? How is that truth being affirmed or denied by your actions?

DESTINY DELIVERED

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 9:21-27

"...The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."

LUKE 9:22

Jesus never hesitates to flip our standards on their head.

At a time when His "public approval ratings" were at their peak, Jesus began to speak about an event that was still to come. Christ's life mirrored that of a train bound by the rails of His Father's will and set to an exact destination on a hillside just outside Jerusalem. The trajectory of Jesus' life delivered our destiny with Him in eternity.

TODAY

Think about the ways you need to deny yourself and take up your cross today. Make a list of things that have got to go, and begin your journey toward that destination.

TRUE GREATNESS

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 9:46-48

"...Whoever receives this child in my name receives me, and whoever receives me receives him who sent me. For he who is least among you all is the one who is great."

LUKE 9:48

The disciples knew Jesus was great. They'd heard His teaching and watched Him perform miracles. But Jesus wasn't boastful—He modeled humility. And they were slow to catch on to the fact that He modeled it as an example for them to follow.

A disciple of Jesus is not someone who chases prestige or power. A disciple welcomes the *least of these*. A disciple shows love and compassion. A disciple recognizes their own position is that of a servant.

TODAY

Remember that Jesus—the Son of God, Creator of the universe—"...came not to be served but to serve..." (Mark 10:45) Who can you serve today? How can you show love and compassion to someone in a way that elevates them above yourself?

THE LOST SHEEP

Daily Scripture Reading: Matthew 18:10-14

“So it is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.”

MATTHEW 18:14

God loves you. It does not matter how new you may be in your relationship with Him or how long you have followed Jesus. The truth of His love will never lose its power! You are loved perfectly by the One who holds the stars in the sky. He loves you enough to leave behind an entire flock of those already found to find you, to drop everything else in search of the one who has gone astray. This love isn't logical. It doesn't make sense, but it's real. Have you accepted this love?

TODAY

Rejoice and praise God for His great love. Take some time today to thank Him.

LIVING WITH THE END IN MIND

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 9:51

“When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem.”

LUKE 9:51

At this time, Jesus was still six months away from the cross.

He still had a lot of ministry left to do, but His mind and heart were resolutely fixed on the cross. Jesus knew His time was limited. He also knew that Jerusalem was going to be the place of His resurrection—the birth of eternal life.

TODAY

Think about the difficult things you are facing right now in your life. Pray that the Lord will help you to live each day with the glorious end in mind, rather than focusing on immediate trials. What can you change so that your focus shifts from the everyday to the eternal?

UNLIKED & SAVED

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 19:1-10

"And Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.'"

LUKE 19:9-10

Zacchaeus was a man who found himself in the crosshairs

of public ridicule like many who find themselves on the wrong end of a viral video. Yet, upon hearing that Jesus was nearby, he made himself an easy target by climbing into a tree in the hopes of seeing the one called Savior. Imagine his surprise when Jesus came to the trunk of the tree and called him down. Think of the shock that fell over the crowd as Jesus proclaimed that salvation had come to the one who was widely known and hated for his thievery and betrayal.

TODAY

Do you know a follower of Jesus who has been labeled "disqualified" due to their past choices? What would it be like for them to hear a knock on their door, the notification of a text to their phone, or a voice like yours saying, "Salvation has come to your house"?

HOSANNA!

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 11:1-10

“And those who went before and those who followed were shouting, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!’”

MARK 11:9

From the claiming of the colt to the crowd waving branches and shouting, “*Hosanna*” (translated, *Save!*), Jerusalem was the place to be. Today’s passage shows us that Passover was about to begin and the city was packed. As Jesus entered the city, He was heralded as the coming King. Day one of Holy Week could not have been more upbeat.

Jesus is King in Heaven and on Earth. And as He came then, so He will come again! *Hosanna!*

TODAY

Celebrate the Lordship of Jesus, King of glory. But don’t do it alone. Get together with friends and tell them the good news of King Jesus.

COMING AGAIN

Daily Scripture Reading: Matthew 24:42-44

"Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

MATTHEW 24:44

The story of Jesus could have simply been one of a great man who lived an incredible life and left a mark on history through teachings. If that were the case, His story may have been a good one worth reading, but it wouldn't be worth giving your life up to follow Him. What makes the story of Jesus so different is His message here in these verses. Jesus was going to come back and finish the story that was started long ago, making everything right!

TODAY

Stop and consider an awesome truth: even if life feels upside down from the way it should be, Jesus is coming back to turn it all around! Today, take some time to thank Him for His redeeming power.

A PRAYER FOR UNITY

Daily Scripture Reading: John 17:1-26

"...That they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

JOHN 17:21

Before He went to the cross, Jesus prayed for His disciples and those who would come after—that means you! We are living out the same faith as the disciples did 2,000 years ago, and Jesus prayed even then that we would be unified so that the world would believe.

This world is full of conflict and hatred. But if we—the Church—put unity on display, it could be the best way for the world to see Jesus. He is the source of our love, and when we love each other well the world will see Jesus in us.

TODAY

Pray, "Father, forgive me for anything I've done to bring disunity to Your Church. Protect us from the evil one who tries to separate us and provoke hate. Please help me to love those around me so that the world might see You in me." Is there anyone in your life you need to ask forgiveness from?

ON THE CROSS

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 15:21-27

"And they crucified him and divided his garments among them, casting lots for them, to decide what each should take."

MARK 15:24

A sinless life facing temptation but never giving in.

An intentional ministry teaching and living alongside ordinary people. A unique message of hope and light in a dark world. A betrayal. An arrest. Biased questioning. Brutal beatings.

And now, a cross.

On the cross, Jesus bore the punishment for our sins. He gave up His perfect life. He set up the greatest victory of all time. And it was all for us.

TODAY

Dwell on what Jesus did on the cross and think about everything that means for you. If it helps, make a list. Thank God for this incredible act of love—the greatest act of love—and ask Him to help you continue to see more of the richness, beauty, and life found in His death.

A DESPERATE REQUEST

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 23:39-43

"And he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' And he said to him, 'Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

LUKE 23:42-43

He feels the nails, too. He takes the burning breaths. The criminal on the cross next to Jesus identifies with Him in a terrible and unique way. Side by side, they endure the pain. When the criminal defends Jesus and then turns to Him to make one last request, we see how Jesus can change someone's heart. The criminal realizes that he deserves to be on the cross, but Jesus is innocent. He recognizes that Jesus is the person He claims to be. And Jesus shows that He cares for the lowest outcast, even as His body screams with pain and fights for breath.

TODAY

Spend time in prayer and express your heart to a Savior who hears. We deserve death, but Jesus took our place. Our past doesn't concern Him. He identifies with us in our most painful moments and hears our desperate pleas.

A FINAL BREATH

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 23:46

*"Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said,
'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!'
And having said this he breathed his last."*

LUKE 23:46

We've looked at the life of Jesus over the last 36 days, and now we come to this drastic verse. The Word, who existed in eternity past, spoke no more. The Breath of God, who breathed life into our mortal bodies, had taken His final breath. It was the plot twist that no one could have imagined. Jesus the Messiah had gone to the cross and suffered to the point of death. His final words were a prayer of obedience: *"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!"*

TODAY

Sit still and reflect on this incredible moment in history. What does this prayer mean for you today?

WHEN THE SUN STOPPED SHINING

Daily Scripture Reading: Luke 23:44-46

"...The sun's light failed..."

LUKE 23:45

The Bible says that while Jesus was on the cross from the sixth hour (noon) until the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.), *"the sun's light failed."* Clearly He wasn't just another person that the Roman Empire crucified. Jesus said He was *"the light of the world."* (John 8:12) And as the Light of the World died, it's clear that a world without Jesus is a truly dark place.

We mourn the death of the Savior. But we know the rest of the story: God's light overcomes all darkness.

TODAY

Take a few minutes and turn off all the lights in your room and pray. Focus on the death of Jesus and the moment the sun stopped shining. Thank Him for enduring the cross, and thank God that, no matter what the world does, His light will always overcome the darkness.

TORN IN TWO

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 15:33-38

"And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom."

MARK 15:37-38

For a thousand years, the temple in Jerusalem was

established as the dwelling place of God. Only the High Priest was allowed to enter the innermost part, the Most Holy Place, once a year to make a sacrifice on behalf of the people. What separated humanity from this place was a curtain, and that curtain tore open at the very moment Jesus took His final breath. When the curtain tore, Jesus became the final sacrifice on our behalf. We can praise God that our great High Priest shed His own blood to give us direct and permanent access to the presence of God.

TODAY

Pray this prayer: "God, thank You for sending Your Son Jesus to be the sacrifice on my behalf so that I can come directly into Your presence. Thank You for giving Your Holy Spirit so that Your presence dwells within me."

THEY SAW

Daily Scripture Reading: Mark 15:42-47

“And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb...”

MARK 15:46

Pilate and a centurion made sure that Jesus had died.

They would have been absolutely sure that they had completed the job they had been asked to do. Mark tells us this, and he is also sure to tell us that Jesus was buried in a sealed tomb and that there were many witnesses to it. Jesus was really dead. On this last day before Easter, we remember that Jesus Christ really died. As we wait for great hope to break forth tomorrow, we know that God is about to do the miracle of miracles: A dead man is about to walk out of His grave.

TODAY

Picture the sight and sound of a huge, heavy stone being rolled in front of the entrance of Jesus' tomb. Feel the finality of it. Feel the anticipation of it because He won't stay there long! Let your life today have a sense of Easter-anticipation. No matter what feels dead, final, or hopeless... a dead man is about to walk out of His grave.

HOPE IS ALIVE

Here we are. We've made it to Easter, and we've made it through *40 Days of Lent*. How did it go? Do you understand the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus better? Do you feel closer to Him?

Perhaps these last 40 days have shown you that our hope is alive. That's a truth worth celebrating! We pray that this month has given you a sense of renewal and drawn your heart closer to Jesus.

DON'T STOP NOW!

Thank you for taking this journey with us. We hope this is just the beginning of a deeper relationship with Jesus for you. We also hope you'll continue to remain devoted to Bible study after Easter and through the rest of this year.

**“...THE MEN SAID TO THEM,
‘WHY DO YOU SEEK
THE LIVING AMONG
THE DEAD? HE IS NOT HERE,
BUT HAS RISEN...”**

LUKE 24:5-6

SHILOH A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

LOVE GOD, LOVE PEOPLE

40 DAYS OF LENT

A DEVOTIONAL TO PREPARE FOR EASTER

In *40 Days of Lent* we'll take a journey together. We'll focus on the final days of Jesus' life leading up to His death on the cross. We'll read Scripture together. And we'll be challenged together. Will you go on this 40-day journey with us as we prepare our hearts and minds for Easter?