

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

JULY 15 - 19, 2019

IN COMMON

SERMON SERIES

June 2 - July 28

MONDAY

Luke 2:41-52; John 6:38

Our current series follows this week's Glenkirk VBS kids' curriculum, each day emphasizing "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and ... have life in His name" (John 20:31). Please pray daily for Glenkirk's young VBS guests that each will encounter Jesus in a personal, transformational way.

Today we find 12-year-old Jesus in Jerusalem's temple, temporarily misplaced by His distraught mother and stepfather. But young Jesus seemed unconcerned about being "lost." Why? Because He wasn't; the Messiah, our sinless Redeemer, was never lost as we were before knowing Him. With His first recorded words, Jesus reminded Mary and Joseph that He was where He belonged—in His Father's house (Luke 2:49). When did our Lord, in His chosen human limitations (Philippians 2:7), grasp His own deity? Always? As an infant? Prior to Luke 2's "temple incident"? The Bible is silent here.

I wrestled with periodic separation anxiety as a child. I remember once at Disneyland losing sight of my family in the crowd and panicking. Yet, upon sinning I separate myself from God relationally until I repent and prayerfully seek forgiveness. Given sin's consequences and its magnitude, why don't I abhor sin's self-imposed alienation from God as much as I feared "getting lost" as a little boy?

Jesus' only apparent, documented fear was of separation from the Father. Per Steve Shirley, there are at least 26 distinct instances of Jesus praying in the Gospels, keeping Father and Son close. I believe

that Jesus' anguished sweat in the Garden of Gethsemane, "like drops of blood" (Luke 22:44), reflected grievous anticipation of disconnection from the Father for eternity's first and only time as He "became sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21) at Calvary. Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46), partly expressed His agony over this Father-Son momentary estrangement.

Being "outside of the Father's house," apart from Him relationally even temporarily, ought to make us shudder. Moreover, knowing God and His love should fuel a life-radiating joyful gratitude. Sadly, my own prayers and Christian walk don't always reflect such orientation. Do yours?

QUESTIONS

Why wasn't 12-year-old Jesus distressed about being forgotten in Jerusalem by His mother and stepfather? What was the only thing which Jesus apparently feared? Why this fear?

PRAYERS FOR VBS

Today is the first day of Vacation Bible School! Please keep all the workers and volunteers in prayer that they will all have energy for this fun week! Please pray as we welcome over 400 campers that they will feel comfortable and have a lot of fun learning about Jesus and growing in their faith and friendships. Tonight the counselors also have a fun fellowship event in the evening. Pray that they too would make friends and build community with one another.

TUESDAY

Matthew 3:1-17; John 1:34; John 20:31

John the Baptist is called by many “the last Old Testament prophet,” as he bridged the Old and New Testaments. Luke’s Gospel introduced John via his pregnant mother, Elizabeth: unborn John “leaped in [Elizabeth’s] womb” as the also pregnant Virgin Mary visited her relative (Luke 1:36, 39-41). John and Jesus were blood relatives, some characterizing them as “second cousins” who, presumably, grew up together.

God’s prophets commonly warned of impending judgment, aiming to return the people to the LORD; however, Malachi was the last prophetic voice heard in Israel some 450 years earlier. Malachi foretold of John as the Lord’s forerunner, “My messenger [who] will prepare the way before Me” (Malachi 3:1), as had Isaiah earlier (Isaiah 40:3). As a prophet “on the other side of the cross,” John emphasized repentance, which Jesus highlighted in commencing His ministry (Matthew 4:11).

Christianity employs baptism as an outward expression of faith, identifying with our Savior in His death, burial and resurrection. Baptism had been used by the ancient Jews for ceremonially cleansing and preparing proselytes (Gentiles converted to Judaism). However, John applied it also to Jews themselves, stressing their need to repent and be “washed” of sins in preparation for the Messiah. As Jesus was the Christ, “the One who did not know sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21, CSB), why would He seek John’s baptism and submit accordingly (Matthew 3:13-16)?

Jesus' baptism validated John's message and ministry. Moreover, it demonstrated Jesus' submission to the Father, symbolic of an entire life of obedience even unto death (Philippians 2:8). Baptism likewise provided witness to the living, triune God authorizing Jesus' ministry and mission: the Son rising up from the water, the Holy Spirit "descending like a dove" upon Him (Matthew 3:16); and the Father declaring authoritatively, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17).

Though baptism is not a condition of salvation as some denominations errantly teach, it is a foundational Sacrament (public sign and seal of union with Christ). Anyone previously unbaptized who has surrendered to Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior should be baptized obediently, as was Jesus Himself.

QUESTIONS

What did John "the Baptist" emphasize in his ministry? What's the purpose of baptism? Why did Jesus, though sinless and perfect, submit to baptism?

PRAYERS FOR VBS

Today the campers at VBS will learn that Jesus is the Son of God. Please pray that this message will sink into their hearts and they will understand Jesus' great love for them. Today is the first day of waterslides and waterplay fun. Pray for safety and that the kids would continue to grow in the new friendships they are making at VBS.

WEDNESDAY

Matthew 14:22-33; John 14:1; John 20:31

Perhaps you've heard that Jesus never did miracles for His own gain, but only to glorify God. Via today's famous "walking on water" and storm-calming miracles, however, He clearly impressed the disciples and prompted their worshipful exclamation, "Truly you are the Son of God!" (v. 33). In walking atop the sea and subduing the winds, was Jesus "showing off" a bit?

Note that Jesus "made the disciples get into the boat" (v. 22), imperiling them when the tempest commenced. God not only permits but also engineers trials for His people, knowing that tribulations help us overcome our delusional "self-sufficiency" and help us learn to trust Him fully. The Israelites' entrapment between Pharaoh's pursuing army and the Red Sea is one example (Exodus 14); Jacob's exhaustion after wrestling with God all night before facing vengeful Esau is another (Genesis 32-33).

Having earlier dismissed the disciples and the crowd, Jesus sought the Father prayerfully. The disciples, conversely, battled the wind for hours until witnessing God the Son miraculously walking on the water sometime after 3 a.m. Most popular translations quote Jesus' calming encouragement to them, "It is I" (Matthew 14:27). However, literally translated, Jesus said here, "I am"—speaking the LORD's personal, covenantal name (Exodus 3:14), declaring both His personal deity and sovereign control over the storm and nature. Jesus thereby glorified the living, triune God.

Peter, learning that power comes from the Christ, stepped out of the boat in faith and likewise walked on the water ... until he took his eyes off of Jesus, focused externally, and began sinking. What an object lesson! God can, and will, do wondrous things for us and through us when we walk faithfully with Him. But absent our faith, we falter as life's storms overwhelm us. Peter again proves a useful example here, fervently appealing with the Bible's shortest prayer, "Lord, save me!" (v. 31).

Jesus declared, "Believe in God; believe also in Me" (John 14:1) not out of His need, but that we might grasp reality and know Yahweh's comfort and rest. Where do you turn first amidst life's ordeals? Whom do you know who is laboring futilely apart from the Prince of Peace?

QUESTIONS

Why did Jesus make the disciples get into the boat, ultimately to face a severe storm? What did Jesus say to the disciples to calm them as He walked on water toward their boat? What caused Peter to begin sinking, even after initial success in walking on the water like Jesus?

PRAYERS FOR VBS

Today marks the middle of the week of VBS, so please pray for continued energy and excitement for all the leaders and volunteers. Today the children are learning about Jesus' power as the Son of God as they learn about how Jesus walked on water. Please pray that they will leave today better understanding God's power! Tonight the counselors also meet for a special movie night, please pray they will continue to grow in fellowship together as they serve alongside one another this week.

THURSDAY

John 20:1-18; John 14:6

Mary Magdalene's initial inability to recognize the risen Christ is fascinating; moreover, she mistook Him for "the gardener" (John 20:14-15). What an apt mistake! God is a "gardener" of sorts, "pruning" us to spur fruitfulness (John 15:2). He planted the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:8-9), its "tree of life"—reappearing in Revelation 22:2—picturing Christ. And Jesus, the "True Vine" (John 15:1), endured woeful trials in Gethsemane's garden (Matthew 26).

Jesus' gentle rebuke of Mary, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father" (20:17), is also remarkable. Earlier, the Lord advised the disciples that it was advantageous that He would leave them and send the Holy Spirit (John 16:7). Jesus' essential message in both instances is: "You need to walk by faith, not by sight," which He later revisits in John 20:29.

Though the Bible is a book of faith, unlike other "holy books," it documents historical details—including names and dates—and later-fulfilled prophecies withstanding skeptics' challenges since antiquity. Claimed "proofs" of "fictitious" biblical characters and other alleged "inventions" have evaporated as archaeological and other scientific discoveries continue to affirm biblical records.

Jesus' death by crucifixion and His empty tomb are central to Christianity. If Jesus did not die and then resurrect, fulfilling prophecy, Christianity is discredited and we remain lost. (See

2018's January 30 devo for more on the empty tomb.) Three of John 20's details to consider: women first discovered the vacated tomb—a fabrication would never feature accounts from such “inadmissible witnesses”; John and Peter substantiated this, though “they did not understand” (20:9)—further supporting the narrative's authenticity; and a neatly folded cloth (20:7) indicated orderliness, not the clutter attributable to a hasty grave robbery. Finally, Mary Magdalene (and later hundreds) personally witnessed the risen Christ (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Colin Moffer poetically captures this good news and our rightful response:

*Tell now a world of sinners
There is release from sin's dark prison;
Hope and life in Him simply because
Jesus Christ the Lord is risen!*

QUESTIONS

Why did the risen Christ admonish Mary Magdalene not to cling to Him in the garden near His tomb? Why are Jesus' death by crucifixion and His empty tomb central to Christianity?

PRAYERS FOR VBS

Today the children learn the amazing story about Jesus being raised from the dead. Please pray they will understand this amazing truth and what that means for the life they have in Jesus. As we near the end of the week, we pray the friendships formed here at VBS will be lasting ones.

FRIDAY

Luke 24:13-35; Romans 10:17; John 20:31

If you could hear any sermon ever given, what could top Jesus Christ's sermon to the two Emmaus travelers? I would love to have my heart "burn" like theirs (Luke 24:27) as Jesus commented upon Old Testament Scriptures regarding Him (v. 22).

Curiously, like Mary Magdalene at the tomb, today's Emmaus-bound pair did not recognize Jesus initially. Did Jesus purposely "veil" His identity (v. 16) from them? Numerous passages in the Old Testament—Deuteronomy 31:17, etc.—speak of God "hiding His face" from the unfaithful. Perhaps relatedly, Jesus often issued "hard teachings" when crowds following Him swelled with the merely curious, entertainment-seekers and/or those wanting only a meal. The challenging, sometimes overstated truths He would speak—e.g., "If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away" (Matthew 5:29)—repelled those following superficially or those wrongly motivated. But why might Jesus originally obscure His identity from presumably faithful, close followers?

Despite His repeated teaching that He would be killed and later rise (Mark 8:31, Matthew 17:22-23, etc.), Jesus' followers did not anticipate His resurrection—Mary and the Emmaus travelers started out downcast accordingly. The Israelites expected their Messiah to be a political liberator and conquering hero, not the Lamb of God who had come to die willingly.

Perhaps by obscuring His identity at first, Jesus illustrated their misunderstanding up to His resurrection. Though there were Old Testament Scriptures prophesying the resurrection—e.g., “He shall see His offspring; He shall prolong His days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in His hand” (Isaiah 53:10)—and despite His repeated resurrection teaching, they thought He was lost to the grave. They misread the Savior and His mission; obscuring His identity, even momentarily, may have provided them a needed jolt as their eyes opened to Jesus.

God provides His Word to build our faith (Romans 10:17) and “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). I wonder how much of Jesus I misjudge or what remains veiled due to my biases and/or preoccupation with worldly concerns. I may have much more in common with the Emmaus pair than I would like to admit.

QUESTIONS

Why do you believe that Mary Magdalene at the tomb and the Emmaus-bound pair did not recognize Jesus initially? Why would Jesus sometimes issue “hard teachings” during His messages? Why didn’t Jesus’ followers expect His resurrection?

PRAYERS FOR VBS

Today is the last day of VBS so please pray that we finish strong! Please pray that God renews all the volunteers and workers energy for this last but important day. Pray that as the children leave today they can look back on this fun week and feel Jesus’ incredible love for them and thankful for the new friendships they were able to make.

Sources

- Steve Shirley's reference is from <http://jesusalive.cc/ques204.htm>.
- The January 30, 2018, Glenkirk Church devo can be found at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1u5y-ivC37-HjXvE3po5tObyk1DINsT8gdVmO8sdARfPs/edit#>
- Colin Moffet's poetry excerpt is from his poem, "He Is Risen," which be found at <http://poetrypoem.com/cgi-bin/index.pl?poemnumber=762839&sitename=colinsfaithpoems&poemoffset=0&displaypoem=t&item=poetry>

