

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEBRUARY 6 - 10, 2023

Book of Luke • Jesus' Invitation to Hospitality

WELCOME TO THE TABLE

Epiphany Series
January 8 - February 19

MONDAY

Read **Luke 23:35-43; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**

We are in a sermon series called “Welcome to the Table” and the associated acts of Christian hospitality. This week we focus on the “Sacrifice of Hospitality.” Earlier in this series, Pastor Tim taught us that, as Christians, our hospitality is the act of welcoming all people to the table of our lives, church and community. I, for one, need to be reminded of this—the busyness of life, family and work can distract me from kingdom purposes here.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18, the Apostle Paul reminds us to *“Rejoice always, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for us.”* Just think for a moment about these words. A joyful, grateful, prayerful heart is inclined toward faithfulness to God’s ways. The opposite is true regarding an ungrateful heart. Open your Bible and meditate on these verses.

I am reminded of an old Vacation Bible School song I learned many years ago with these lyrics: “I have the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart to stay. I have the love of Jesus, love of Jesus, love of Jesus down in my heart to stay.” (George W. Clarke) The words of this song and Paul’s words from 1 Thessalonians help us have the right orientation and heart-set for responding to the challenges of life.

This week we focus on the Sacrifice of Hospitality. What does sacrifice have to do with hospitality? Sacrifice, per dictionary references, is surrender of something for the sake of something else or something given up or lost. So what could we sacrifice for the sake of inviting others to a seat at our table? Pastor Tim also taught us earlier in this series that in Jesus' day only people of the same class would gather at a table together, but Jesus modeled something different. Jesus modeled meeting anyone at the table of His life.

Read Luke 23:35-43 and reflect upon it. We will unpack these verses throughout this week as we consider the joy and opportunities of our Sacrifice of Hospitality. Ask the Spirit for help to have a heart that is more joyful, grateful and loving.

QUESTIONS

Do you invite people into your personal journey with Jesus Christ? If so, what ways, methods, and circumstances enable this? Will you make this a focus in 2023?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministry

Ethnos Asia (headquarters in Bangkok, Thailand) is an organization founded by Asian missionaries to serve churches in the restricted-access countries of Southeast Asia. Christians in these countries are often seriously restricted by governmental policies and persecuted by anti-Christian radicals. Pray that the Ethnos Asia leaders will have God's vision and wisdom for doing His work.

TUESDAY

Read **Luke 23:35-43; John 3:16; Matthew 28:19-20**

In Luke 23:35-43, Jesus is experiencing the anguish and humiliation of the cross in the midst of enemies and revilers—people most of us would normally avoid. And yet amidst these circumstances, Jesus brought those on the scene of Calvary’s cross to His table. There, beaten badly and about to die physically, He demonstrated that salvation is open to any who seek Him in repentant surrender regardless of their prior deeds and current circumstances.

Matthew 28:19-20 features what we know as the “Great Commission,” commanding believers to “*Go ... and make disciples of all nations*”—not just some, and not just people who are like us (in stature, heritage, profession, income and wealth, educational background, culture, family circumstances, ethnicity, social standing, etc.). Jesus personified this remarkably, evidenced even among His dying moments on the cross.

The most famous Biblical passage truly summarizes the gift of salvation that Jesus delivered to us through His obedience on the cross: “*For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but will have eternal life.*” This John 3:16 verse is lived out in Luke 23:35-43 remarkably, despite Jesus’ horrific circumstances.

Walk through Luke 23:35-43. At the point of desperation, amidst unimaginable pain and impending death, three individuals hang on three crosses left to die. One is our Savior Jesus, wrongly condemned, and two criminals rightly convicted, evidenced by one's confession: "We [are condemned] justly ... the due reward for our deeds" (Luke 23:41). At that moment the criminal recognizing Jesus as Lord and Savior proclaimed His innocence and asked to be remembered and saved by the Messiah. Jesus, despite His own torment, responded with words of forgiveness and promise of new eternal life. This was a "deathbed conversion" indeed!

These passages are at the heart of our individual stories to share at our table, our reason for hope and joy that are found in Jesus. We need to keep this deep down in our hearts so that we can remember it in our hard times and our joy-filled times and be able to share it in happy and troubled times.

QUESTIONS

How does Jesus' dialog with the repentant criminal affect you?

How like Jesus' heart is your heart? What work would you like God to do in your heart?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministry in Nepal

Ethnos Asia was able to gather the Tibetan church leaders together to form the Tibetan Evangelical Alliance so that these churches would work together in furthering the Lord's work. Pray for these local Tibetan leaders that they will continue to mature in their leadership, their love for the Lord, and unity in doing His work.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Luke 23:35-43; Matthew 26:36-46**

Yesterday we examined Jesus' receiving a believing criminal into His Kingdom and giving him eternal life. Let's now consider where Jesus' mental and physical state was preceding this encounter with the two crucified criminals. Jesus came as a Sacrifice, knowing He would be betrayed and executed. Imagine the weight and burden of this!

In Matthew 26:36-46, in the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus reveals *"My soul is deeply grieved, even to the point of death"* (v. 38). Here Jesus models openness before God and prayer, seeking wisdom, comfort, guidance and reassurance. Jesus' obedience to His mission and declaration of grief reveal the gravity of His sacrifice.

Jesus subsequently prays, *"My Father, if this cup cannot be taken away unless I drink it, Your will must be done"* (v. 39). Clearly, His destiny weighed heavily on Him. Jesus, God the Son and Son of Man, struggled here because He knew what was before Him. However, amidst the pain and humiliation that He experienced as a Man before enemies, critics, friends and family, Jesus modeled full acceptance and obedience to the Father's will.

How often do we struggle with life's circumstances? Jesus modeled how, amidst the pains and trials of life, we can bring those burdens to the cross prayerfully and lay them at the feet of the living God. We can

tell God we don't like our circumstances, seeking guidance and help aligned with His will. In Luke 23:43, despite all that He was experiencing personally, Jesus was available to welcome the repentant criminal on the cross to His table.

The CAIN song, "I'm So Blessed," offers these related, encouraging lyrics:

"Trouble knocking at my door today
I ain't gonna let it in
And worry wanna steal my joy away
But I ain't gonna let it win
'Cause on my best day, I'm a child of God
On my worst day, I'm a child of God."

QUESTIONS

How do you mentally handle life's setbacks? Where do you take these?
How much are you like Jesus amidst life's challenges?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministry in Northeast Thailand

Pray for Ethnos Asia's Bible school in Northeast Thailand. Pray for the new leaders at the Bible school who plan to start up the school again this year after being closed for three years due to COVID. Pray that they will have the Lord's wisdom in all their decisions. Pray that the Lord will lead the right students to attend.

THURSDAY

Read **Luke 23:35-43; Mark 10:32-34, 14:65, 15:16-20; Acts 16:22-28**

Let's consider Jesus' physical state amidst His interactions with the two criminals on the cross. In Mark 10:32-34, Jesus vividly explains to His disciples what will happen to Him at the hands of His enemies. Jesus foretells how He will be spit on, mocked, flogged, beaten and ultimately killed. He also includes an amazing, encouraging promise: "After three days, [I] will rise" (Mark 10:34).

Mark 14:65 and Mark 15:16-20 describe the terrible physical, emotional and relational abuse Jesus endured via the soldiers responsible for Him before He is delivered to Calvary's cross. These events unfolded just as Jesus had described earlier in Mark 10. The 2004 movie, *The Passion of Christ*, depicted the brutal physical and mental beating that Jesus took, even the producers' "softened" depictions are hard to watch and consider.

Jesus' beating as described in these passages from Mark, given their brutality, would be totally unacceptable in today's society, particularly Western society. They would be considered inhumane, degrading, and socially unacceptable for even the worst criminals. Consider these recorded acts of spitting on this Man, public flogging that laid His back and legs ripped and bleeding profusely, and pushing a crown of sharp thorns into His head! Then all of this was followed by the torment and disgrace of crucifixion on a cross. The Man Jesus of

Nazareth experienced unimaginable physical pain, mockery, being stripped naked while brutalized physically. All of this was done in public view of onlookers, including His own mother, adding mental anguish as we considered yesterday.

Jesus sacrificed Himself, taking this physical punishment, because He knew this was God's divine plan, a plan He voluntarily and humbly submitted to doing. Jesus thereby modeled obedience to the Father amidst incredible pain and suffering for God's Kingdom purposes.

Paul and Silas have a similar account of sacrifice of physical punishment in Acts 16:22-28, albeit on a much smaller scale than Jesus on Calvary's cross, as they were badly beaten and jailed. But they brought the jailer to their table, the Jesus' table, amidst their trial in prayer and worshiping God through song. Paul's and Silas' example led their jailer and his family to saving belief and baptism in Christ.

QUESTIONS

When another has hurt you, whether physically or emotionally, how did you handle it? Have you been able to attest to your faith in Jesus amidst suffering?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministry in Cambodia

A week ago, in conjunction with the 100 Years Celebration of Christianity in Cambodia, Ethnos Asia conducted a seminar for Intercessory Prayer Training for Cambodian Christians. Pray that they will grow in their power for intercessory prayer.

FRIDAY

Read **Luke 23:35-43; Romans 8:38-39**

As we have considered this week, Luke 23:35-43 shares Jesus' interaction with the two criminals on the cross. Jesus is obviously on the brink of physical death, a death He foresaw and submitted to willingly.

Earlier this week we touched upon how He struggled, in His humanity, with this reality in the Garden of Gethsemane on the eve of His flogging and crucifixion. He took His beatings and the cross's suffering without retaliating. Jesus was torn, insulted and mocked, and nailed to a cross unto death by crucifixion—yet Jesus remained obedient and faithful throughout! As this advanced toward its climax, Jesus interacted with the two criminals who were also being crucified, Jesus making His table of hospitality available to them. One of them received the invitation. Even on death's door, Jesus carried out the “Great Commission” of Matthew 28:19-20, engaging the repentant criminal and promising him eternal life.

Physical death is inevitable (unless Christ returns before we die). As Christians, we are assured that by believing and accepting Jesus Christ as God's Son, our Lord and Savior, we are saved and forgiven, welcomed into God's eternal Kingdom—just like the surrendered thief on the cross! Following Christ with this assurance makes death something not to fear, despite its accompanying worldly sadness and relational loss.

Paul wrote accordingly: *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord”* (Romans 8:38-39).

Paul’s Spirit-inspired words in Romans encourage us that having that joy and love of Jesus deep in our hearts will enable us to navigate what life throws at us—including mental and physical challenges and even death. Life as fallen people (even in Christ) in a fallen world is not easy. However, we have the opportunity to experience joy in opening our tables of Christ’s hospitality to others as we live through life’s personal sacrifices and proclaim we are children of God.

QUESTIONS

Does your Christian life include sacrifices that you faithfully endure for Kingdom purposes? How do you open your personal table of hospitality to others to allow you to share your faith?

PRAYERS

For Ethnos Asia Ministry

Ethnos Asia maintains regional offices in the U.S., Canada, and the Philippines. Pray for the U.S. office that it might be effective in challenging American churches to greater prayer for the persecuted church in the world.

Sources

- George W. Clark's lyrics are from his song, "I've Got the Joy" (copyrighted 1926, Public Domain).
- CAIN's lyrics are from their song, "I'm So Blessed" (written by Madison Cain Johnson, Matthew Joseph West, Jonathan Smith, Taylor Cain, Logan Bryant Cain; AZ Lyrics, 2021).
- This week's devos also draw from: *The New Bible Commentary*, written by F. Davidson, A.M. Stibbs, and E.F. Kevan (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1958); *Nelson's Quick Reference Bible Concordance* by Ronald F. Youngblood (Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1993); *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Merriam Webster Publisher, 1991); and *Bible Gateway* website (<https://www.biblegateway.com/>).

