

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

FEB 26 - MAR 1, 2024

THE GREATNESS OF THE

CROSS

2/18 - 3/17

LENTEN SERMON SERIES



MONDAY

Read **1 Peter 2:21**

An Example in Obedience

“For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps.”
(1 Peter 2:21 ESV)

One of the most haunting aspects of the Passion Week is when the Son of God (divine) hangs revealing His humanity on the cross. Jesus had known throughout his earthly life exactly how His life was going to end, and we cannot even begin to imagine how knowing of this end must have filled His thoughts on so many occasions as He began to prepare Himself as a man for His final journey to Jerusalem.

The scene we are referring to, of course, is when Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, praying and preparing Himself for what was to come the next day. We are told that, very naturally, He was *“sorrowful and troubled”* and eventually He *“fell on His face and prayed, saying, ‘My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will’”* (Matthew 26:37-39 ESV). This is the ultimate example of **OBEDIENCE** to the will of the Father!

If we are to follow the example of Christ in every way, we have to realize that in the 21st century, to declare *“not as I will”* is just about as counter-cultural as we can get! We live in a day when rights have

superseded righteousness, and to declare that someone else has the “right” to dictate how I should live and how I should react in any given situation is not a very popular message. Yet obedience to God is all that we are called to as Christians.

The former pastor of a large church in New York, Stephen Olford, often repeated, “Keep your obedience up to date.” What a message for us today! If the story of Easter teaches us nothing else (and of course, it teaches us many lessons), this is one we need to grasp firmly. Our lives are not our own, and if Jesus could acknowledge that when He prayed to the Father, how much more must we? Certainly, Peter would have had this in mind when he called those who carried the name of Christ to “*follow in His steps.*”

QUESTIONS

How will you live differently today by intentionally placing His will before your will? What is one thing in your life that you need to adjust in order to grow in obedience to God?

PRAYER

For His Children (FHC)—Ecuador

Pray for Ecuador. It is going through significant political, social and economic unrest. Drug cartels are turning a quiet country into a haven for violence. It is also a country with limited resources to help offset the poverty of a large segment of the population. Life is getting more difficult and dangerous.

TUESDAY

Read **Genesis 22:1-12**

An Example in Submission

One of the greatest examples of submission in all of Scripture is found in the book of Genesis when Abraham obeyed God and made preparations to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. What is often missed in this narrative is the simplicity of the dramatic statement that Abraham “*bound Isaac his son and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood*” (Genesis 22:9 ESV). Think about this for a moment. Here we have a healthy young man and a father over one hundred years old! How easy it would have been for Isaac simply to run away, or at least to object to being made to lie quietly on the altar. Yet there is absolutely no reference to this at all. Isaac clearly submitted to what he saw as his father obeying God’s command, and he likewise was willing to exercise faith that “*God will provide Himself the lamb*” (v. 8), even as he watched his father raise the knife to kill him! Here is **SUBMISSION** of the highest order by a young man following in the footsteps of his obedient father.

Yet, it is exactly this example of submission that our Lord showed. Even though He told His accusers that if He wished to avoid the death they had planned for Him, He could “*appeal to [His] Father, and He [would] at once send [Him] more than twelve legions of angels*” (Matthew 26:53 ESV), He did not do that. As God, Jesus

had much more power than young Isaac had on what was probably the same mountain in Jerusalem, but He chose not to exercise it! He submitted both to the Father's will and to the Divine Plan, which He had been party to from "*the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 13:8).

So, when Peter urges us to follow the example of Jesus, this is another area in our life that we can work on. The world reinterprets submission as "subordination," but the beauty of "submission" is that it is entirely voluntary (Isaac on the wood, Jesus to the cross). In Christ's case, it was submission to the Father. Incredibly, in our case, it's also submission to that same Father. We do it for His sake and for the sake of His Kingdom.

QUESTIONS

When you reflect on biblical submission, what does this mean to you? How does this thought bring you closer to Christ?

PRAYER

For His Children (FHC)—Ecuador

Pray for the "*tias*" (the care givers). Many travel several hours by bus and foot to reach the orphanage in Quito, leaving their families behind for several days while they care for the children. Disruption of their travel by street protests and violence makes their journeys increasingly difficult and time-consuming.



WEDNESDAY

Read [John 10:17-33](#)

An Example in Innocence

It has been suggested that “the central point of Peter’s allusion to Christ’s example is that He suffered innocently and for doing good.” (Gordon Clark) Remember when the Jewish opponents took up stones to stone Jesus, they stated that it was because He was claiming Himself to be God, and not “for a good work” (John 10:33 ESV). There was, and is, no one more innocent than Jesus.

This example of Christ teaches us how we are to react to an unjust world, where we often feel that we are truly not deserving of the anger shown against our faith in God. We are reminded that there will be undeserving and illogical attacks. (Why stone Jesus to death when He is doing good works?!) Many times our response is not always one of innocence, and often it does not seem to mirror the example that Christ left for us to follow. We need to reflect the same **INNOCENCE** which characterized our Lord. He is the perfect model.

Of course, our challenge is that we have inherited a sin nature (which Jesus did not have) and so we have a natural inclination to head in the wrong direction. However, once our hearts have been changed by the gospel, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit who is given to help us resist the temptations of Satan and to live in a way which is

characterized by the fruit of the Spirit and energized by the gifts of the Spirit. There is actually no excuse; we simply **MUST** live our lives in a way that others will “see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Jesus taught His disciples (and therefore us) that, even when we are in a world where we feel we are “*in the midst of wolves*,” we are to be “*innocent as doves*” (Matthew 10:16). When our Lord hung on the cross of Calvary, no-one could say of Him that He deserved it. Likewise, when we are called to suffer for the sake of Christ, it should not be possible for anyone to say, “They deserved it!”

QUESTIONS

As you reflect on the times that you have been verbally “stoned” for your faith, what has been your reaction? How could the example of Jesus perhaps change that reaction in the future?

PRAYER

For His Children (FHC)—Ecuador

Pray for all of FHC’s team on the ground—the tias, administrators, social workers, drivers, and maintenance and security personnel. Protect them from harm. Let them experience peace and comfort during these hard times.

THURSDAY

Read **Romans 6**

An Example in Sinlessness

We are told very clearly that Jesus is able to “*sympathize with our weaknesses*” because He is “*one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15 ESV). Let’s be honest—our immediate response to a statement like that is, “Well, of course, He is God.” We make it sound as if it was easy for Jesus to resist the temptations of Satan in the desert, or any other sinful influence with which He was most certainly surrounded. But that thinking is to misunderstand the nature of His humanness.

It is also easy to misunderstand the high bar which our relationship with Jesus requires of us. In 1 Peter 1, we find this daunting quote from the Old Testament, “*You shall be holy, for I am holy*” (1 Peter 1:16, citing Leviticus 11:44). Holiness means to be “set apart” for God, so the requirement that the Lord prescribes for us as believers is to be completely different from the world in which we find ourselves. This means striving to follow Jesus’ example of **SINLESSNESS!**

Now all those who have a little knowledge of the Bible will vigorously protest that “sinless perfection” is a nice thought, but an unachievable practice! We may even quote Paul’s statement in Romans where even the saintly apostle declared, “*I do not do the good I want, but*

the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing” (Romans 7:19 ESV).
“You see,” we may protest, “it can’t be done!”

Well, perhaps we are looking at this the wrong way. Maybe the issue is: we are trying as hard as we possibly can to attempt to be sinless (as Paul certainly was), or we are just giving in to temptation and forgiveness as the line of least resistance in our daily walk with Him? The challenge of Jesus’ example is that we should be working daily to eradicate sin from our lives, seeking the righteousness that Paul himself talked about in both Romans 6 and Romans 8—righteousness which Jesus Himself called us to in the Sermon on the Mount. *“To this you have been called,”* adds Peter, to *“follow in His steps”* (1 Peter 2:21).

QUESTIONS

In your daily walk with Jesus, how can you be more intentional in living a life of “less” sin?

PRAYER

For His Children (FHC)—Ecuador

Pray for the children’s cases and for the best resolution to be found quickly—whether it is by reuniting them with their biological families or assigning them to a forever family through adoption. Pray for wisdom for FHC’s social workers as they advocate for them.



FRIDAY

Read **Luke 9:23; Romans 12:1-2**

An Example in Suffering

The fifth aspect of this powerful verse is without doubt the toughest for us to live out each day. Does God really WANT us to follow His example and suffer? Obviously, we are not called to follow Him to a Roman cross, even though He did urge us to “take up [the] cross” (Luke 9:23) as part of our Christian walk. We also know that in this world, there ARE definitely those who are called to make the ultimate sacrifice in martyrdom for the sake of Jesus Christ. But for most of us, our sacrifice tends to take on a different form.

Paul offers some advice when he tells us to offer our bodies as “living sacrifices” (Romans 12:1-2). This might mean a willingness to sacrifice our time, our resources, our comforts, our personal preferences for Christ’s sake. But Jesus didn’t state “taking up the cross” for nothing! The one danger of the very familiar account of Easter is that it is easy to sanitize the story, since many wear a cross just as a piece of jewelry. There is nothing wrong with that, as long as it reminds us that the cross represents the ultimate sacrifice of our Lord, accomplished through the most horrendous suffering—all so that you and I could avoid the eternal punishment that we deserved for our own sins!

So the cross is the great example of how to live sacrificially and cruciformly for the sake of the world! It is a call to **SUFFERING**, of whatever form, if that's the will of God for us. The crucifixion of Christ was the unfairest event in the history of the world since Jesus did not deserve one moment of what happened to Him. So perhaps let us try to be more aware of this when we protest that it is "unfair" when we have to suffer, even minor indignities or criticism or opposition, for the sake of the gospel. We are actually called to that by Jesus Himself, and we should therefore try to adopt the mindset of our Lord's own brother, James, when he urges us, *"Count it all joy ... when you meet trials of various kinds"* (James 1:2).

QUESTIONS

As you consider how there is suffering in your life, how does the example of Jesus help you respond?

PRAYER

For His Children (FHC)—Ecuador

Praise the Lord for bringing faithful supporters alongside the ministry during 2023 and ensuring quality care for each child. Staff members are excited to see what God will do in 2024 through the love of all those who support the ministry.



Sources

- Stephen Olford, "The Pattern for Revival," Sermon Index, <https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/articles/index.php?view=article&aid=27981>.
- Gordon H. Clark, *Peter Speaks Today: A Devotional Commentary on First Peter* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1967), p. 105.

These devotionals are written by a team of Glenkirk volunteers who represent a range of beliefs within the evangelical spectrum. As such, some of the expressed views may not necessarily represent those of pastoral leadership. If you find yourself challenged by a devo, explore why that might be and, should you have questions or concerns, please reach out to Pastor Kate Wallace Nunneley at KNunneley@GlenkirkChurch.org. If you are interested in joining those who pen Glenkirk devotionals, please contact Pastor Kate.