



FLORIDA FORWARD ON MISSION

Matthew 28:18-20

CONNECT 3
A 40-WEEK SERIES
ENCOUNTERING JESUS NOW!



Equipping pastors to equip leaders for life.
Encounter & Encourage, Equip & Empower



40 Weeks Encountering Jesus Now

Today, we begin a new year. A year we have never seen, experiences we have never had, and new friends we will meet all await us as we walk in the light to the best of our knowledge and ability.

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing, and perfect will” (Romans 12:1-2, NIV).

A deceitful pattern unfolds daily all around us.

We have a choice: we can imitate or “trace over” what the world illustrates or take a direction quite different from it.

“Do not conform to the pattern of this world...” You choose!

Paul warns against being shaped by the ways of the world. In this context, “world” refers to the prevailing system of values, beliefs, and behaviors that oppose God. These include selfishness, pride, materialism, and moral compromise. Conforming means passively adopting these patterns, often without critical thought, which leads to a life disconnected from God’s purposes.

Instead of conforming, Paul calls for transformation—a word that implies a complete change in form or nature. Personal transformation happens through the renewal of the mind.

A renewed mind is one that:

1. Sees life through the lens of God’s Word.
2. Values what God values.
3. Is guided by Holy Spirit rather than cultural trends or personal desires.

Renewal requires intentional effort. It involves encountering Jesus in Scripture, prayer, and discipleship and allowing God’s truth to shape our thoughts and attitudes.

This transformation equips believers to discern God's will, distinguishing between what pleases Him and what does not. Instead of blindly following worldly standards, a renewed mind seeks God's guidance and lives in alignment with His purposes.

Paul's exhortation is part of a larger appeal in ***Romans 12:1-2*** for believers to offer their lives as a ***"living sacrifice."*** This means dedicating every part of themselves—body, mind, and will—to God. Nonconformity to the world and transformation through a renewed mind are essential for living out this sacrificial life.

Paul's message concerns identity and allegiance. He calls believers to reject the world's transient, often destructive values and embrace God's eternal, life-giving truth. This is a call to countercultural living grounded in a deep relationship with Christ.

So, live as Jesus did.

After washing His disciples' feet, Jesus said,
"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you." ***John 13:15***

Jesus explicitly encourages His disciples to imitate His humility and servant-heartedness.

"The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher." ***Luke 6:40***

This implies that disciples are to grow to reflect the character and conduct of their teacher—Jesus.

"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me." ***Matthew 16:24***

Jesus called His disciples to follow His example of self-denial and sacrifice.

John wrote, ***"Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did."*** ***1 John 2:6***

While these are not Jesus' direct words, they reflect the call to imitate His life.

Through His actions and teachings, Jesus clearly modeled a life of love, humility, obedience to God, and service to others, encouraging His disciples to follow in His footsteps.

Jesus told His disciples, ***"You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. Whoever walks in the dark does not know where they are going."***

Darkness will overtake us unless we walk in the light. As followers of Jesus within the Church of God of Prophecy, we covenanted together to "walk in the light to the

best of our knowledge and ability.” I don’t know about you, but no one ever told me what that meant. I was young, and maybe they did not think I would understand, but it is the responsibility of a God-called minister of this fellowship and God’s Kingdom to help others understand their walk in Jesus.

So, you might remember hearing me talk about three sources of light.

- 1) **God’s Word** – *Thy word is a lamp to my feet*
- 2) **God’s Son** – *“I am the Light of the world”*
- 3) **God’s People** – *“You are the light of the world”*

Walking in the light to the best of our knowledge and ability so that the darkness does not overtake us requires walking in God’s Word, His Son, and with His People.

In 2025, as we walk in the light, I hope you will enjoy the **One-Year Reading Guide** I prepare for your daily encounters with God’s Word. You may also download the **Bible Reading Plan from YouVersion**. It has identical content but is in digital format. We will also pray for each other as we serve the churches we have been assigned in the **Praying for Florida Pastors, Churches, and Ministries**.

Then, over the next 40 Weeks, we will be a series of **Encountering Jesus of the New Testament**. Not just from a historical perspective but a contemporary one – applying what we have read into our current context and how that impacts our life and living. Because walking in the light is about life and living, not death and dying.

How are you encountering Jesus in ways that renew your mind? As you encounter Jesus today, you can “trace over” His pattern or the pattern of the world. Make the right choice.



As seen in Luke and John, encountering Jesus in the New Testament invites us to connect the "then" with the "now." Some of life’s struggles stem from a failure to apply the lessons of the past to our present. Jesus is relevant now, not just in the past. We will delve into Luke 1 and John 1, today.

Luke 1 **introduces Jesus** as the long-awaited fulfillment of God’s promises and highlights God’s sovereignty, grace, and faithfulness in His plan of salvation. Have you ever had to wait for what you thought would be a good thing for God to do immediately?

In Luke 1:26-38, the angel Gabriel appears to Mary, announcing that she will conceive a child by the Holy Spirit. Jesus is described as:

- Great
- The Son of the Most High

- The one who will inherit David's throne
- A King whose reign will have no end.

This angelic word shows that Jesus is divine (the Son of God) and human (born of Mary). His coming fulfills prophecy and establishes God's eternal and unshakable kingdom.

Then, moving on to verses 46-55, **Mary's Song of Praise** exalts God for His mercy, justice, and faithfulness. She acknowledges Jesus as part of God's redemptive plan—lifting the humble and fulfilling His covenant to Abraham. Jesus represents God's mercy to the humble and oppressed and will usher in a kingdom marked by justice, reversing earthly power dynamics.

John 1 offers a profound theological perspective on Jesus, also emphasizing His eternal and divine nature and His role as the source of life and light.

Verses 1-5 – Jesus as the Eternal Word

- Jesus is called the Word (Logos).
- He existed before creation: "In the beginning was the Word."
- He is with God and is God.
- Through Him, all things were created.
- He is the source of life and light for humanity, overcoming darkness.

If we walk in Him, darkness will not overtake us. Let's walk in Him. Jesus is God's self-revelation to humanity and the source of spiritual and physical life.

VERSES 9-13 – JESUS AS THE LIGHT AND LIFE

- Jesus is the true light, offering salvation to all.
- Though many rejected Him, those who believed were given the right to become children of God.

Jesus' coming brings both hope and a challenge: Will we accept or reject Him? Belief in Him leads to new life and a restored relationship with God.

VERSES 14-18 – JESUS AS THE WORD MADE FLESH

- Jesus, the Word, became flesh (incarnate) and dwelt among us.
- He is full of grace and truth.
- Through Him, we receive grace upon grace, and God is made known to us.

Jesus is God incarnate—fully God and fully human. His life reveals God's heart, filled with grace and truth. In Him, we see God's glory and receive salvation.

John 1 is one of the most frequently preached passages during the Christmas season. On Christmas Sundays in Sunday School (yes, some churches still have Sunday School), we often hear about the eternal Word of God becoming flesh.

Reflecting on verses 1-14, I realized that in over 40 Christmas sermons, I had often focused on who Jesus was in the past rather than who He is now. These verses repeatedly use the word “was” to describe Jesus: “was, was, was, was.” Verse 14, a cornerstone for many Christmas sermons, says, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” Yet this portrayal is often anchored in the past.

Beginning the new year, let us focus on Jesus NOW.

Brenda often says, “What He did, what He does, what He is, what He was.” Verse 12 stands out powerfully: ***“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13, NKJV).*** What He was then, He is now; what He did then, He does now, as we receive Him as a Father.

JESUS THEN AND NOW:

- **Divine and Eternal:** Jesus pre-existed creation as the Word of God (John 1:1).
- **Incarnate:** Though divine, Jesus took on flesh to dwell among humanity (John 1:14). Today, the word will never be flesh again, but the flesh becomes a word that illustrates Jesus in every nation, province, state, city, or parish.
- **Savior and King:** Jesus’ coming fulfills God’s promises of redemption and a kingdom without end (Luke 1:32-33). NOW, not just then!
- **Revealer of God:** Through Jesus, we see God’s grace, truth, and glory (John 1:14, 18).
- **Light and Life:** Jesus overcomes darkness, bringing salvation and life to all who believe (John 1:4, 12).

These passages reveal Jesus as the Son of God, Creator, and Redeemer; they perfectly demonstrate God’s character and purpose. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. The question is: **Is He all that to you?**



Today, we will move to Luke 2. Luke offers profound glimpses into the nature and mission of Jesus, but its familiarity often causes us to overlook some treasures. Let’s uncover a few:

Verse 7 tells us that Jesus was laid in a manger—not a poetic detail but, in reality, a stone feeding trough. We often associate the manger with Jesus’ humility, but it’s much more

than that.

He was wrapped in cloth and placed in the stone trough as a bed. Just as the lambs born in Bethlehem were wrapped to prevent blemishes and ensure they were suitable for sacrifices, Jesus was wrapped. This speaks to the lowliness of the Savior’s entry into the world and His

being a perfect human sacrifice that no one could compare—the Creator of the universe born in the crude simplicity of a stable over a royal palace.

Jesus' birthplace, Bethlehem, is known for producing lambs for temple sacrifices. This symbolizes Jesus's role as the Lamb of God, "who takes away the world's sins." Just as those lambs were wrapped in linen to protect them, so too was Jesus, illustrating His identity, perfection, and purpose.

The angel declared that the shepherds would find the Savior wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger (Luke 2:12). The manger also symbolizes how Jesus transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary, turning ordinary lives into vessels of His glory.

How often do we miss divine significance in what seems mundane?

Are we willing to embrace humility to fulfill God's purposes, even when it feels beneath us?

Verses 22-24 describe Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus at the temple and offering a sacrifice of two birds, the provision for those unable to afford a lamb (Leviticus 12:8). Despite their poverty, they honored God's commands, exemplifying faithfulness and obedience.

Born into a family that revered God's Word, Jesus was shaped by righteousness and humility.

Are we cultivating faithfulness in our lives that shape others for God's glory?

JESUS' MISSION DECLARED BY SIMEON

In verses 29-32, Simeon's prophecy identifies Jesus as the Savior for both Israel and the Gentiles—a light of revelation for all nations. This declaration broke cultural and religious norms, foreshadowing the global reach of His mission.

Do we align our hearts with God's expansive vision or limit His work to our comfort zones?

At just 12 years old, Jesus was aware of who He was; He proclaimed to His parents, "***Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?***" (Luke 2:49). This statement revealed His divine identity and priorities. Yet, He returned to Nazareth and submitted to His earthly parents (Luke 2:51), demonstrating obedience and patience.

Do we trust God's timing in our calling, balancing divine purpose with faithful stewardship of daily responsibilities?

Luke 2 is more than a narrative of Jesus' birth and childhood—it's a window into the heart of God. In the ordinary rhythms of life, God was shaping the extraordinary. May we learn to see Jesus not only in the grand but also in the hidden, and may we allow Him to shape us for His purposes today?

NOW Jesus shapes us from ordinary to extraordinary. Ordinary people do extraordinary things as they surrender to an extraordinary God. So today, it is not just now Jesus, but **JESUS NOW**.

You think you are just ordinary, but in Christ, everyone becomes extraordinary and empowered to do extraordinary things because of an extraordinary God!



Luke 3:1-22 often serves as a backdrop for John the Baptist's ministry, but woven into this passage are subtle revelations about Jesus that shape our understanding of His mission and identity. Let's take a closer look.

The Word in the wilderness. While the rational mind does not think of **good and wilderness in the same sentence**, **God speaks in the wilderness**. We don't want to be in the wilderness, but there, God speaks clearly. We seem to be most open to His voice in the wilderness. In good times, we often miss His voice. God told John in the wilderness, *"Prepare the way; the roller coaster my people have been riding will become a straight, smooth path."* Preach the baptism of repentance.

John preached, preparing the way. He called people as they were in an effort to bring them to all God intended for them. Jesus was coming, and John recognized Him and said **behold the Lamp of God that takes away the sins of the world**, and John baptized Jesus, knowing he must decrease that Jesus might increase. Oh, that Jesus would now increase in our lives, but it is only as we decrease. Decrease that He might increase. It may be that we are so endeavoring to increase that Jesus becomes less than what God intended.

We have heard this theme before.

John 1:8, John is not the light.

John 1:20, He is not the Christ.

John 1:21, He is not Elijah and not the prophet.

John 1:23, He is just a voice crying in the wilderness.

John 1:27, He is not worthy to unstrap Jesus's sandals.

Luke 3:1-2 meticulously records the political and religious leaders of the time, from Tiberius Caesar to the high priests Annas and Caiaphas. These verses aren't just historical markers; they remind us that Jesus stepped into history at a specific time ordained by God. In political oppression and religious corruption, the Word of God came—not to the powerful, but to John in the wilderness, signaling God's countercultural approach.

Are we attentive **NOW** to how God moves in unlikely ways and unexpected seasons?

In verses 4-6, John the Baptist quotes Isaiah 40:3-5, describing the preparation of the way for the Lord. This imagery of valleys being filled and rough paths made smooth points to Jesus'

role in leveling the playing field for humanity. Through Him, salvation would be accessible to all, both high and low, Jew and Gentile.

Do we live NOW as if the way to God has been made clear, or do we still cling to barriers He has already removed?

John's fiery proclamation in verses 16-17 reveals two critical roles of Jesus. He would baptize with the Holy Spirit—bringing life and renewal—and with fire—bringing purification and judgment. The winnowing fork imagery points to Jesus as both Savior and Judge, separating the wheat from the chaff. His ministry would comfort the repentant and confront the unrepentant.

Are we allowing Jesus NOW to refine us, or are we resisting His purifying work in our lives?

Verse 21 quietly reveals something profound: Jesus, the sinless Son of God, was baptized alongside sinners. He had no need for repentance, yet He stood with humanity in their need for forgiveness. This act foreshadows the cross, where He would fully identify with our sin to offer redemption.

Do we follow Jesus' example of humility NOW, stepping into others' brokenness rather than standing apart from it?

In verses 21-22, heaven opens as Jesus is baptized. The Spirit descends on Him bodily like a dove, and the Father's voice declares, "***You are My beloved Son; in You, I am well pleased.***" This is one of the clearest Trinitarian moments in Scripture, affirming Jesus' divine identity and His mission to reconcile humanity to God.

Do we rest NOW in God's given identity, or are we striving for the approval He has already declared?

It's easy to overlook that when Jesus prayed, the heavens opened (verse 21). This small detail reveals the centrality of prayer in His life and ministry. Even at this early stage, He demonstrates dependence on the Father and models the intimacy we're invited to share.

Are we cultivating a prayer life NOW that invites heaven to break into our earthly circumstances?

In these verses, we see Jesus stepping into the world not as a distant deity but as a God who identifies with us, challenges us, and redeems us. His humility, mission, and divine affirmation call us to respond with trust and obedience. May we live as people who recognize the fullness of who He is and walk confidently to be His beloved.



Matthew 4:1-11 recounts Jesus' temptation in the wilderness—here we are again in the wilderness. God is doing in the wilderness what only happens in the wilderness. I say it again: don't refuse the wilderness. Do not abort what God wants to do in you in the wilderness that He might do through you in life. Matthew records a familiar story, yet one filled with easily overlooked treasures. This passage is more than a showdown with Satan; it reveals the heart, identity, and mission of Jesus. Let's take a closer look.

Verse 1 says, *"Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."* **The Spirit led Him there.** This wasn't an accident, and it wasn't punishment—it was preparation. Before stepping into public ministry, Jesus faced temptation so He could succeed where Adam and Israel had failed.

RIGHT NOW, do we see our wilderness seasons as God's preparation, or do we mistake them for His abandonment?

The wilderness mirrors Israel's journey. Jesus fasted for 40 days, echoing Israel's 40 years in the wilderness. But where Israel grumbled and rebelled, Jesus remained faithful. Each time Satan tempted Him, Jesus quoted from Deuteronomy—words given to Israel during their desert testing. He showed Himself to be the true and obedient Son who fulfills what Israel could not.

RIGHT NOW, are we relying on God's Word to sustain us in our wilderness seasons, or are we looking to quick fixes that don't last?

Jesus resisted Satan's shortcut to power; in verses 8-10, Satan offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world—without the cross. The temptation wasn't just about power but about bypassing God's plan. But Jesus chose obedience over ease. He knew the glory of the kingdom would only come through the suffering of the cross.

Are we tempted NOW to pursue God's promises in our own way rather than trusting His timing and process?

Jesus' hunger points to deeper satisfaction as verse 2 tells us, *"He was hungry."* This simple statement reminds us of Jesus' humanity. Yet when Satan tempted Him to turn stones into bread, Jesus replied, *"Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (v. 4). Jesus shows that physical needs, while real, are not ultimate. True life and satisfaction come from dependence on God's Word.

Are we NOW feeding our souls with God's truth, or are we settling for temporary substitutes to satisfy our hunger?

Jesus' identity was attacked—and affirmed in verses 3 & 6. In each verse, Satan began his temptations with, *"If you are the Son of God..."* Just a few verses earlier, at His baptism, the Father declared, *"This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased"* (Matthew 3:17).

Satan's strategy was to sow doubt about Jesus' identity. Still, Jesus stood firm in what the Father had already spoken.

How often do we let circumstances or Satan's lies challenge the identity God has already declared over us?

Jesus defeated Satan with Scripture alone, countering him with, "*It is written...*" (vv. 4, 7, 10). He didn't engage in debate or rely on His divine power. He declared the Word of God with authority. Jesus' victory demonstrates the power of Scripture as both a defense and a weapon against the enemy's lies.

Do we know God's Word well enough to stand firm when temptation comes, or are we spiritually unarmed?

Angels ministered to Jesus—in God's timing. After the devil left, "*angels came and were ministering to Him*" (v. 11). God's provision came after the trial. Jesus trusted the Father's care and timing rather than grasping at the shortcuts Satan offered.

Are we willing to endure hardship, trusting God's provision will come in His perfect timing?

In today's passage, we see Jesus as the victorious Son who perfectly obeyed where others failed. He teaches us to trust God's Word, reject shortcuts, and stand firm in our identity as children of God. Jesus didn't just overcome temptation for Himself—He did it for us, showing that in Him, we too can walk in victory. Jesus is NOW at work in our tribulation. He says, "Be of good comfort; I have overcome the world." Jesus is overcoming the world NOW through those surrendered to Him. The devil is defeated NOW because Jesus is overcoming NOW as he did then. But He is doing so through you and me.



The Gospel of John layers every encounter with profound meaning, and these two passages—where Jesus calls His first disciples and turns water into wine—reveal easily overlooked insights into His nature, mission, and heart. Let's unpack these treasures.

Jesus Sees Beyond the Surface (*John 1:35-51*)

When Jesus calls His first disciples, He demonstrates His divine ability to see who they are *and* who they will become.

"You are Simon, son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (v. 42). Jesus renames Simon *before* Simon lives into that identity. "Cephas" means rock, yet Simon was anything but stable at first. Jesus sees beyond Simon's impetuosity to the steadfast leader he would become.

Are we living NOW in the identity Jesus sees in us, or are we stuck in the limitations of who we've been?

Nathanael begins with doubt: "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" (v. 46). But Jesus sees his heart, declaring, "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*" (v. 47). Nathanael's honesty—though blunt—meets Jesus' gracious invitation, "*You will see greater things than these*" (v. 50).

Jesus meets us NOW in our doubt but invites us to a greater revelation. Are we willing to step closer, like Nathanael?

Jesus invites us NOW to intimacy and obedience. Notice the flow of John 1:35-39. When John the Baptist points to Jesus, Andrew and another disciple begin following Him. Jesus asks, "*What are you seeking?*"—a question that cuts to the heart of their motivation. When they ask, "*Where are you staying?*" Jesus doesn't just answer; He invites: "*Come and you will see*" (v. 39).

- Jesus offers more than information—He offers relationship. He doesn't explain His identity in detail; He invites them into His presence.

Are we content with knowing *about* Jesus, or do we accept His invitation to *be* with Him and experience Him personally?

Jesus revealed His glory in the ordinary (*John 2:1-12*). The wedding at Cana is a turning point—it's where Jesus performs His first public miracle. But notice the details:

- A wedding, an ordinary social gathering. Jesus chooses a seemingly insignificant moment to reveal His glory (v. 11). This shows His care for life's small, personal joys.
- "*They have no wine*" (v. 3). Running out of wine at a Jewish wedding was a cultural embarrassment. Jesus steps into the moment, not because it's monumental, but because He values people and provides abundantly (v. 6-10).

Do we invite Jesus NOW into what seems to be small or ordinary areas of our lives, trusting He cares for them? Are you seeing God's glory revealed NOW

Jesus Honors Faith-Filled Obedience. Mary's role at the wedding is significant yet subtle. She notices the need, brings it to Jesus, and says to the servants, "*Do whatever He tells you*" (v. 5). She doesn't know *how* He'll fix it, but she trusts Him.

- The servants obey without question. They fill the stone jars "*to the brim*" (v. 7)—an act of faith, considering they're hauling heavy water for an unclear purpose. Their obedience makes way for the miracle.

Are we willing to act in obedience, even when the outcome isn't clear? Faithful action invites divine provision.

Jesus' miracles reveal abundance and transformation The transformation of water into wine (v. 9) is more than a display of power; it's a picture of Jesus' mission. He didn't just make wine—He made *the best* wine (v. 10), symbolizing the new and better covenant He brings.

- The jars used were for *ceremonial washing* (v. 6), yet Jesus used them to produce wine—a symbol of joy, blessing, and the coming Kingdom. It's a subtle declaration that Jesus is ushering in a new era of grace, replacing empty rituals with overflowing life.

Are we holding onto the “old jars” of tradition and self-effort, or are we letting Jesus transform us with His abundant grace?

Jesus' miraculous glory inspires deeper belief. John 2:11 tells us, “*This is the first of His signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee and manifested His glory. And His disciples believed in Him.*” The miracle wasn't flashy or loud but revealed enough of Jesus' heart and power to strengthen the disciples' faith.

Are we NOW looking for grand gestures to believe in, or are we attentive to the quiet ways Jesus reveals His glory in our lives?

In John 1:35-51 and 2:1-12, we see Jesus as the One who sees us NOW, invites us NOW, and transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary NOW. He moves in intimate and public moments, meeting us in our need and calling us deeper into His presence. Like His first disciples, may we, as disciples of Jesus, respond to the invitation: “*Come and see.*”



John 3:1-21 takes us into the quiet night where Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a ruler of the Jews, meets Jesus for a conversation that unpacks eternity, new life, and the nature of God's love. It's familiar ground for many, but beneath the surface are powerful insights into Jesus that reveal His mission, character, and heart in ways we often miss.

Jesus Meets Us in Our Darkness

Nicodemus comes to Jesus *at night* (v. 2). This detail isn't just about the time of day; it's symbolic. Night represents secrecy, fear, and a lack of understanding. Although a man of influence and learning, Nicodemus is in spiritual darkness, unable to grasp who Jesus really is.

- Jesus doesn't turn Nicodemus away or shame him for his confusion. Instead, He welcomes him into a conversation that leads toward truth. This is Jesus—meeting us

right where we are, in our questions, doubts, and uncertainties, and gently leading us toward the light.

Are there areas in our lives where we're still coming to Jesus "at night"—hesitant, unsure, and afraid of exposure? Jesus isn't afraid of our darkness; He welcomes us into His light.

Jesus Sees the Heart Beneath the Questions

Nicodemus opens with flattery: "*Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with Him*" (v. 2). But Jesus doesn't linger on Nicodemus' words. He cuts straight to the point: "*Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God*" (v. 3).

- Jesus isn't distracted by appearances or polite formalities. He goes straight to the heart of Nicodemus' need—spiritual rebirth. Nicodemus was looking for answers, but Jesus points him to transformation.

When we come to Jesus, are we willing to let Him speak to the deeper issues of our hearts, or do we hide behind surface-level questions and pleasantries?

Jesus Describes the New Birth as Spirit-Led, Not Man-Made

Nicodemus struggles with Jesus' teaching about being "born again" (v. 4). His mind is fixed on the physical, but Jesus redirects him to the work of the Spirit: "*Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit*" (v. 6).

- The new birth isn't something we achieve through effort or merit. It's entirely the work of the Holy Spirit—a divine act that we can't control or manufacture. Jesus compares it to the wind: unpredictable, uncontrollable, but unmistakably real (v. 8).

Do we try to force spiritual change in ourselves and others, or do we trust the Holy Spirit to bring true transformation? The wind of the Spirit moves where it wills; our role is to surrender and follow.

Jesus Foreshadows the Cross

In verse 14, Jesus connects His mission to a story from the Old Testament: "*Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in Him.*"

- The reference points to Numbers 21, where the Israelites were dying from serpent bites because of their sin. God instructed Moses to lift up a bronze serpent on a pole—anyone who looked at it in faith was healed. Jesus is saying that He, too, will be "lifted up"—on the cross—so that all who look to Him in faith will receive eternal life.

Are we fixing our eyes on Jesus, the One “lifted up” for us, or are we still looking for salvation in lesser places? Healing comes through beholding Him.

Jesus Redefines God’s Love

John 3:16 is so familiar that we often miss its radical nature: *“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.”*

- For Nicodemus, a Jewish leader, “the world” likely didn’t include the Gentiles or sinners. But Jesus declares that God’s love isn’t limited to a select group—it’s for *the world*. The gift of God’s Son is a demonstration of His love for every tribe, tongue, and nation.
- God’s love is also sacrificial. He *gave* His Son. This isn’t a love of mere sentiment; it’s a love that costs everything.

Do we see God’s love as personal, radical, and for *everyone*? Are we willing to reflect that kind of love to the world around us?

Jesus Came to Rescue, Not to Condemn

In verse 17, Jesus clarifies His mission: *“For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him.”* This is a striking statement. Jesus’ purpose is rescue, not judgment.

- Yet, verse 18 reveals that rejection of Jesus leads to condemnation: *“Whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.”* Jesus doesn’t *cause* condemnation—He reveals the condition we’re already in apart from Him. Do we view Jesus as our Rescuer, or are we afraid of judgment? His desire is to save, to pull us out of the condemnation we’re already in.

Jesus, the Light Who Exposes and Transforms

Jesus describes Himself as the light: *“Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil”* (v. 19). This is one of the most sobering truths in this passage—people *love* the darkness. The problem isn’t ignorance; it’s resistance to the light.

- The light of Jesus exposes our sin, our pride, and our need for Him. But it also offers hope—because when we step into the light, we’re not just exposed; we’re transformed (v. 21).

Are we avoiding the light of Jesus because it feels uncomfortable? His light doesn’t shame us; it frees us. Step into the light and let Him do His work.

The Invitation: Believe and Be Made New

At the heart of John 3:1-21 is an invitation—to Nicodemus, and to us. Jesus invites us to be born again, to look to Him as our Savior, and to step into the light. This isn't about religion or self-improvement; it's about surrender, trust, and transformation.

- Nicodemus came to Jesus with questions, but he left with an invitation to new life. Are we, like Nicodemus, willing to let Jesus challenge our assumptions and lead us to transformation?

In this passage, Jesus reveals Himself as the light of the world, the source of new birth, and the Savior who came not to condemn but to rescue. He doesn't just answer Nicodemus' questions—He invites him into a whole new reality. The same invitation is extended to us: to believe, to surrender, and to step into the light where transformation begins. This is the Jesus we see in John 3—a Savior who meets us in the night and calls us into new life.



I am glad you joined me for this week's Connect 3. This is week seven of our 40-week study where you and I will encounter a RIGHT NOW Jesus not just Him that we read about in the Scripture.

But the One that is working on our behalf making intercession NOW.

John 4:1-42 recounts the interaction between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well. Here are four insights about Jesus that might be easily missed:

Jesus Prioritizes Divine Purpose Over Social Norms

- Jesus intentionally travels through Samaria, a region often avoided by Jews due to deep-seated prejudice. This shows His commitment to reaching all people, regardless of cultural or societal barriers.
- Insight: Jesus values divine purpose and human souls over cultural norms and expectations, setting a precedent for breaking down barriers in ministry.

Jesus Demonstrates Relational Evangelism

- Rather than starting with direct rebuke or preaching, Jesus engages the Samaritan woman in a simple conversation about water. He uses a relatable context to reveal profound spiritual truths.
- Jesus models the importance of meeting people where they are, using relational and contextual methods to share the gospel.

Jesus Values and Equips the Marginalized

- The Samaritan woman is an outcast not only due to her ethnicity but also her personal history. Despite this, Jesus reveals His identity as the Messiah to her—a rare and significant moment.
- Jesus demonstrates that God's kingdom is inclusive, and He uses unlikely individuals to carry His message. The woman becomes a bold evangelist to her community.

Jesus Reveals Himself as the Source of True Worship

- In His dialogue, Jesus explains that true worship transcends location, tradition, or ritual. Worship is to be in spirit and truth, aligning with the heart of God.
- Jesus positions Himself as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant and the center of worship, offering direct access to God through His person and work.

These insights reveal Jesus as a boundary-breaking, relational, and inclusive Savior who invites all into a transformative relationship with Him.



Matthew 5, often referred to as the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, offers profound insights into Jesus' teaching and character. Here are four insights about Jesus that might be easily missed:

1. JESUS AS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW AND PROPHETS

- In Matthew 5:17-18, Jesus declares that He has not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them. This reveals His role as the culmination of God's redemptive plan.
- Jesus positions Himself as the bridge between the Old and New Testaments, embodying the heart of God's law and its ultimate purpose.

Jesus Prioritizes Inner Transformation Over Outward Conformity

- Throughout the chapter, Jesus contrasts external obedience with internal transformation (e.g., anger as the root of murder, lust as the root of adultery).
- Insight: Jesus emphasizes that true righteousness begins in the heart, pointing to the necessity of a transformed inner life rather than mere external compliance.

Jesus Extends the Scope of Love and Mercy

- In Matthew 5:43-48, Jesus challenges the conventional understanding of love by commanding His followers to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute them.
- Jesus reveals God's radical and inclusive love, calling His disciples to reflect divine mercy and perfection in their relationships with others.

Jesus Invites His Followers to Participate in His Kingdom Mission

- The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) describe the character and blessings of those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus invites His disciples to embrace a countercultural life, marked by humility, mercy, purity, and peacemaking.
- Jesus not only teaches about the kingdom but empowers His followers to embody its values, showing that they are integral to advancing His mission on earth.

These insights underscore Jesus' role in fulfilling God's promises, His focus on heart-level transformation, His radical call to love, and His empowering invitation to join Him in His kingdom work.



Matthew 6 continues Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, focusing on practical aspects of righteous living. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this chapter:

1. JESUS EMPHASIZES A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Jesus Emphasizes a Personal Relationship with God

- In Matthew 6:6, Jesus instructs His followers to pray in private, addressing God as their Father. This teaching highlights the intimacy and personal connection God desires with His children.
- Jesus reveals God as a relational Father who values sincerity over public displays of religion, inviting believers into a deep, personal relationship.

Jesus Addresses the Motivation Behind the Actions

- Jesus repeatedly warns against performing righteous deeds—giving, praying, and fasting—for public recognition (Matthew 6:1-18). He shifts the focus from external rewards to pleasing God.
- Jesus calls for a purity of intention, teaching that acts of worship should flow from a desire to honor God rather than gain human approval.

Jesus Challenges Anxiety by Revealing God's Care

- In Matthew 6:25-34, Jesus uses examples from nature, like birds and flowers, to demonstrate God's provision and care for His creation. He contrasts worry with trust in God's sovereignty.
- Jesus invites His followers to relinquish anxiety and prioritize seeking God's kingdom, assuring them that God is faithful to provide for their needs.

Jesus Teaches About Eternal Priorities

- In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus instructs His followers to store up treasures in heaven rather than on earth, emphasizing the transient nature of worldly possessions.

- Jesus reveals Himself as the one who redirects hearts toward eternal values, showing that where our treasure is, our heart will be also.

These insights highlight Jesus' emphasis on authenticity, trust, eternal perspective, and a deeply personal relationship with God. He challenges His followers to live with kingdom values in every aspect of life.



Matthew 7 concludes the Sermon on the Mount, offering practical guidance for living in God's kingdom. Here are four insights about Jesus from this chapter that might be easily missed:

Jesus Highlights Discernment Over Judgement

- In Matthew 7:1-5, Jesus warns against hypocritical judgment, urging His followers to address their own flaws before criticizing others. However, in Matthew 7:6, He also advises discernment about sharing sacred truths.
- Jesus balances compassion with wisdom, teaching that His followers should avoid condemning others while exercising discernment in spiritual matters.

Jesus Reveals the Generosity of God

- In Matthew 7:7-11, Jesus encourages persistent prayer, comparing God's generosity to that of earthly parents who give good gifts to their children.
- Jesus underscores the Father's goodness and eagerness to bless His children, encouraging believers to approach God with confidence and trust.

Jesus Defines the Narrow Path of Life

- In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus contrasts the wide path leading to destruction with the narrow path leading to life, emphasizing the need for intentionality in following Him.
- Jesus reveals that true discipleship requires commitment and focus, highlighting the importance of walking in obedience to His teachings despite its challenges.

Jesus Warns Against Superficial Faith

- In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus declares that not everyone who calls Him "Lord" will enter the kingdom, but only those who do the will of the Father. He emphasizes genuine relationship over outward displays of religiosity.
- Jesus prioritizes authenticity in faith, warning against empty professions and calling His followers into a life of active obedience and intimacy with Him.

These insights reveal Jesus as a compassionate yet discerning teacher who invites His followers into a relationship rooted in trust, authenticity, and purposeful living according to kingdom values.



Matthew 8 showcases Jesus' authority and compassion through miracles and interactions. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this chapter:

Jesus Demonstrates a Willingness to heal all Who Come to Him

- In Matthew 8:1-4, Jesus heals a man with leprosy who doubts if Jesus is willing to heal him. Jesus responds, "I am willing," and heals him immediately.
- Jesus reveals His compassion and accessibility, showing that He is not only able but also willing to meet the needs of those who come to Him in faith.

Jesus Honors Unexpected Faith

- In Matthew 8:5-13, Jesus marvels at the faith of a Roman centurion who believes Jesus can heal his servant from a distance. Jesus praises this Gentile's faith as greater than any in Israel.
- Jesus highlights that faith transcends cultural and ethnic boundaries, demonstrating that the kingdom of God is open to all who trust Him.

Jesus Prioritizes His Mission Over Comfort

- When a teacher of the law offers to follow Him, Jesus replies in Matthew 8:20, "The Son of Man has no place to lay His head." This statement underscores the cost of discipleship.
- Jesus models a life of sacrificial obedience, reminding His followers that His mission often requires leaving behind earthly comforts and securities.

Jesus Has Authority Over Both natural and Supernatural Forces

- In Matthew 8:23-27, Jesus calms a storm, revealing His authority over nature. In Matthew 8:28-34, He casts demons out of two men, demonstrating His power over spiritual forces.
- Jesus displays His divine sovereignty, reassuring His followers that He has ultimate control over every physical or spiritual realm.

These insights reveal Jesus as compassionate, inclusive, sacrificial, and sovereign—inviting His followers to trust in His power and join Him in His mission, even when it demands personal sacrifice.



Matthew 9 highlights Jesus' authority and compassion as He continues His ministry through teaching, healing, and calling disciples. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this chapter:

Jesus Prioritizes Spiritual Healing Over Physical Healing

- In Matthew 9:1-8, Jesus forgives a paralyzed man's sins before healing him physically, emphasizing the greater importance of spiritual restoration.
- Jesus reveals that His primary mission is to address humanity's greatest need—reconciliation with God—highlighting the significance of eternal matters over temporary concerns.

Jesus Calls the Unlikely to Follow Him

- In Matthew 9:9-13, Jesus calls Matthew, a tax collector, to be His disciple. Tax collectors were despised as sinners, yet Jesus not only calls Matthew but also dines with others like him.
- Jesus demonstrates that His grace extends to the outcasts and unlikely, showing that no one is beyond His reach or purpose in the kingdom.

Jesus Honors Persistent Faith

- In Matthew 9:18-26, a synagogue leader humbly asks Jesus to raise his daughter, and a woman with a bleeding condition reaches out to touch His garment. Jesus responds to both acts of faith with healing and restoration.
- Jesus is moved by faith, no matter how public or private, revealing His willingness to respond to those who trust Him, regardless of their status or approach.

Jesus Invites Others into His Mission

- In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus laments the scarcity of laborers for the plentiful harvest and calls His disciples to pray for more workers. This sets the stage for their active involvement in His mission.
- Jesus shows that His ministry is not a solo effort but one that involves mobilizing His followers to participate in bringing the kingdom of God to others.

These insights present Jesus as a compassionate healer, a redeemer of the marginalized, an encourager of faith, and a leader who equips and invites His followers into His mission.

Bottom of Form



Luke 6:1-16 recounts significant moments in Jesus' ministry, including controversies over the Sabbath, miraculous healing, and the calling of His twelve apostles. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this passage:

Jesus Prioritizes Human Need Over Religious Legalism

In Luke 6:1-5, Jesus defends His disciples for plucking grain on the Sabbath, pointing out that David ate consecrated bread when hungry and declaring Himself "Lord of the Sabbath." Jesus challenges rigid legalism, emphasizing that God's laws are meant to serve humanity's well-being, not to burden or oppress.

Jesus Demonstrates Authority Over the Sabbath

- In Luke 6:6-11, Jesus heals a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, knowing it would provoke controversy. He asks whether it is lawful to do good or harm on the Sabbath, silencing His critics.
- Jesus asserts His authority to interpret and fulfill the true purpose of the Sabbath, highlighting mercy and restoration as central to God's heart.

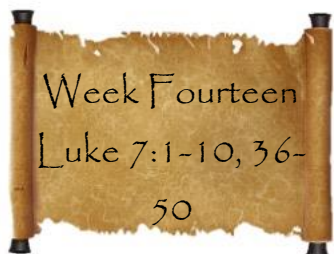
Jesus Models Dependence on God in Decision-Making

- Before choosing His twelve apostles, Jesus prays the entire night (Luke 6:12-13). This shows the significance He places on seeking the Father's guidance in pivotal moments.
- Jesus models complete reliance on God's wisdom, demonstrating that even in His humanity, He prioritized communion with the Father for major decisions.

Jesus Chooses a Diverse Group for His Mission

- The twelve apostles include fishermen, a tax collector (Matthew), and a zealot (Simon)—individuals with vastly different backgrounds and ideologies (Luke 6:14-16).
- Jesus intentionally selects a diverse and unlikely group to lead His mission, showing that His kingdom transcends human divisions and unites people around His purpose.

These insights highlight Jesus as a compassionate and authoritative teacher, a prayerful leader, and a unifier who values mercy and purpose over legalism and division.



Luke 7:1-10 and 36-50 reveal two distinct encounters that highlight Jesus' authority, compassion, and approach to faith and forgiveness. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from these passages:

Jesus Honors Faith that Recognizes His Authority

- In Luke 7:1-10, a centurion demonstrates profound faith by acknowledging Jesus' authority to heal without needing to visit his servant physically. Jesus marvels at his faith, calling it greater than any He has found in Israel.
- Jesus responds to faith that recognizes His divine authority, showing that understanding His power and position is central to effective faith, regardless of cultural or religious background.

Jesus Redefines Worthiness

- The centurion expresses unworthiness for Jesus to enter his house (Luke 7:6-7). Despite being a respected figure, he humbly acknowledges his dependence on Jesus' grace.
- Jesus demonstrates that worthiness in His kingdom is not based on status, deeds, or heritage but on humility and trust in Him.

Jesus Welcomes the Outcast with Compassion & Dignity

- In Luke 7:36-50, a sinful woman anoints Jesus' feet with her tears and expensive perfume. Despite the Pharisee's judgmental attitude, Jesus defends her actions and publicly forgives her sins.
- Jesus elevates the marginalized by treating them with dignity and openly accepting their acts of devotion, showing that repentance and love matter more than societal labels or reputations.

Jesus Highlights Love as Evidence of Forgiveness

- Jesus contrasts the woman's extravagant love with the Pharisee's lack of hospitality, explaining that her love is a response to the great forgiveness she has received (Luke 7:47).
- Jesus reveals that genuine love for Him flows from an awareness of the depth of His grace and forgiveness, emphasizing that those who are forgiven much, love much.

These passages reveal Jesus as one who honors faith, redefines worthiness, embraces the outcast, and celebrates love as evidence of His transformative forgiveness. They demonstrate His power to bridge social divides and meet people at their point of deepest need.



Luke 8:1-15 (the Parable of the Sower) and Luke 9:57-62 (the cost of following Jesus) highlight key aspects of Jesus' ministry and teachings. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from these passages:

Jesus Actively Includes Women in His Ministry

- Luke 8:1-3 mentions women like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna who supported Jesus' ministry financially and traveled with Him and His disciples.
- Jesus defies cultural norms by valuing and involving women in significant roles within His ministry, demonstrating the inclusiveness of His kingdom.

Jesus Emphasizes the Power and Purpose of the Word

- In the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:4-15), Jesus explains that the seed represents the Word of God, which produces fruit when received with a noble and good heart.
- Jesus reveals that His mission is rooted in spreading the Word, transforming lives not through coercion but by finding receptive hearts prepared for growth.

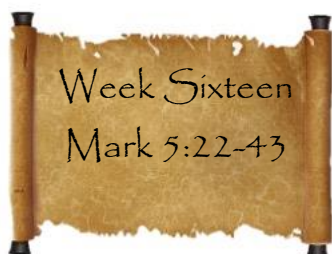
Jesus Requires Uncompromising Commitment

- In Luke 9:57-62, Jesus responds to three potential followers with challenges that reveal the cost of discipleship: prioritizing His mission over comfort, social obligations, and personal ties.
- Jesus sets high expectations for His followers and makes it clear that allegiance to Him requires radical commitment and undivided focus.

Jesus Highlights the Importance of Lasting Fruit

- In the explanation of the Parable of the Sower (Luke 8:15), Jesus emphasizes that good soil represents those who not only hear the Word but also retain it and persevere to produce a harvest.
- Jesus is not just concerned with an initial response to His message but with His followers' long-term faithfulness and fruitfulness, reflecting the depth of true discipleship.

These insights reveal Jesus as an inclusive leader, a purposeful teacher, and a demanding yet loving Savior who seeks lasting transformation and unwavering devotion from His followers.



Mark 5:22-43 tells the intertwined stories of Jairus's plea for his dying daughter and the healing of a woman with a bleeding condition. These narratives reveal Jesus' authority, compassion, and responsiveness to faith. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this passage:

Jesus' Timing Demonstrates Both Patience and Purpose

- While Jesus is on His way to heal Jairus's daughter, He stops to address the woman who touched His garment for healing (Mark 5:30-34). This delay seems costly as Jairus's daughter dies during the interruption.
- Jesus is never hurried or overwhelmed by circumstances. His delays are purposeful, teaching trust in His timing and His power over even the finality of death.

Jesus Responds to Hidden, Desperate Faith

- The woman with the issue of blood approaches Jesus secretly, believing that touching His garment will heal her. Jesus acknowledges her publicly, affirming her faith and calling her "daughter" (Mark 5:34).
- Jesus not only heals but also restores identity and dignity, demonstrating that He values personal connection and the faith of those who may feel unseen.

Jesus Encourages Faith in the Face of Fear and Doubt

- When news comes that Jairus's daughter has died, Jesus immediately tells him, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (Mark 5:36). Despite the seemingly hopeless situation, He urges Jairus to maintain faith.
- Jesus strengthens and sustains His followers' faith, even in the face of fear, demonstrating His power to overcome the impossible.

Jesus Reveals His Authority Over Death with Tenderness

- When Jesus raises Jairus's daughter, He takes her by the hand and speaks gently, saying, "Little girl, I say to you, get up!" (Mark 5:41). He then instructs her parents to give her something to eat, showing concern for her practical needs.
- Jesus' authority over death is accompanied by profound compassion and care, highlighting His divine power and His tender humanity.



These insights show Jesus as a compassionate and powerful Savior who values personal faith, works on His divine timeline, and brings hope even in the most desperate circumstances.

Matthew 10 records Jesus commissioning His twelve disciples for mission and giving them instructions on how to carry out their work. Here are four easily missed insights

about Jesus from this chapter:

Jesus Releases Authority for Kingdom Work

- In Matthew 10:1, Jesus gives His disciples authority to drive out impure spirits and heal every disease and sickness, empowering them to extend His ministry.
- Jesus does not keep His mission to Himself but equips and entrusts His followers to carry out His work, showing His desire for partnership in spreading God's kingdom.

Jesus Prioritizes the Lost Sheep of Israel While Preparing for a Global Mission

- In Matthew 10:5-6, Jesus instructs the disciples to focus their efforts on "the lost sheep of Israel." This initial focus sets the groundwork for a later mission to all nations (Matthew 28:19).
- Jesus demonstrates strategic intentionality in His mission, starting with Israel to fulfill prophecy and then broadening to include all peoples.

Jesus Warns About Persecution and Encourages Fearless Faith

- In Matthew 10:16-25, Jesus prepares His disciples for rejection and persecution, comparing them to sheep among wolves. He assures them that the Spirit will give them words to speak in difficult moments.
- Jesus does not downplay the challenges of discipleship but offers assurance of divine help and the ultimate triumph of truth, encouraging perseverance and fearless faith.

Jesus Demands Total Surrender

- In Matthew 10:37-39, Jesus declares that loving Him must come before family ties and personal comfort, and that finding one's life requires losing it for His sake.
- Jesus reveals the radical nature of discipleship, requiring complete allegiance to Him above all else, even when it involves sacrifice or loss.

These insights portray Jesus as an empowering leader, a strategic visionary, a realistic yet encouraging teacher, and a Lord who calls for unwavering devotion. His instructions remind us of the cost and privilege of participating in His kingdom mission.



Mark 6:30-44 recounts the feeding of the five thousand, a miraculous event that reveals Jesus' compassion, provision, and power. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this passage:

Jesus Recognizes the Need for Rest and Ministry

- In Mark 6:31, Jesus invites His disciples to "come with Me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" after their demanding work. Despite the upcoming miracle, Jesus initially prioritizes their well-being.
- Jesus acknowledges the importance of rest and renewal, showing that effective ministry requires a balance of activity and retreat.

Jesus Has Compassion for Spiritual and Physical Needs

- In Mark 6:34, Jesus is moved with compassion when He sees the crowd as "sheep without a shepherd," teaching them many things before addressing their physical hunger.
- Jesus' compassion extends to both spiritual instruction and physical provision, emphasizing the holistic care He offers to those who follow Him.

Jesus Invites His Disciples into His Work

- When the disciples suggest sending the crowd away to buy food, Jesus challenges them: "You give them something to eat" (Mark 6:37). He later involves them in distributing the food to the crowd.
- Jesus trains His disciples by involving them in His work, teaching them to trust in His provision and participate actively in meeting the needs of others.

Jesus Multiplies What is Surrendered to Him

- Using five loaves and two fish offered by the crowd, Jesus feeds over five thousand people with abundance, leaving twelve baskets of leftovers (Mark 6:41-43).
- Jesus demonstrates that He can multiply even the smallest offerings when they are placed in His hands, encouraging trust in His ability to provide beyond expectations.

These insights highlight Jesus as a compassionate and wise leader who cares for His followers' needs, trains them for ministry, and reveals His divine power to provide abundantly. This event reinforces trust in His sufficiency and calls His disciples to share in His work.



Matthew 14:22-33 recounts Jesus walking on water and Peter's attempt to do the same. This passage highlights Jesus' authority, care, and call to faith. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this story:

Jesus Prioritizes Solitude and Prayer

- After sending the disciples ahead and dismissing the crowd, Jesus retreats to the mountainside to pray (Matthew 14:23).
- Jesus, even in the midst of a busy ministry, consistently seeks time alone with the Father, modeling the importance of prayer as the source of strength and guidance.

Jesus is Present Even in Difficult Circumstances

- The disciples face strong winds and waves in the middle of the night, and Jesus walks toward them on the water (Matthew 14:25). His arrival shows that He is aware of their struggle and comes to meet them in their distress.

- Jesus reveals that He is present with His followers in life's storms, demonstrating His ability to overcome the forces that threaten them.

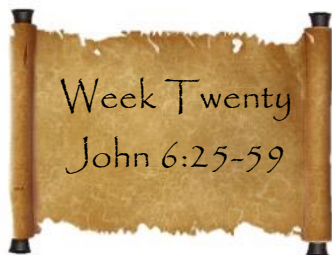
Jesus Encourages Bold Faith in Fear

- Peter steps out of the boat to walk on water at Jesus' command, but he begins to sink when he focuses on the wind (Matthew 14:28-31). Jesus saves him and gently rebukes his doubt.
- Jesus invites His followers to take bold steps of faith, even in the face of fear, while reminding them to keep their focus on Him rather than their circumstances.

Jesus' Actions Inspire Worship and Recognition of His Divinity

- After Jesus calms the storm and gets into the boat, the disciples worship Him, declaring, "Truly you are the Son of God" (Matthew 14:33).
- Jesus' miraculous power over nature and His care for His disciples lead them to a deeper understanding of His divine identity and a response of worship.

These insights reveal Jesus as a prayerful and attentive Savior, a source of courage, and the Lord over creation. This passage calls His followers to trust Him completely, even when faced with overwhelming challenges.



John 6:25-59 captures Jesus' discourse on being the Bread of Life, following the miraculous feeding of the 5,000. This passage reveals deep truths about Jesus' identity and mission. Here are four easily missed insights about Jesus from this section:

Jesus Exposes Shallow Motivation for Following Him

- In John 6:26-27, Jesus confronts the crowd for seeking Him not because they understood the miracle's significance but because they wanted more physical food. He urges them to work for food that endures to eternal life.
- Jesus challenges superficial faith that focuses on material blessings, emphasizing the need to seek eternal satisfaction in Him rather than temporary benefits.

Jesus Declares Himself as the Ultimate Provision from God

- In John 6:32-35, Jesus contrasts the manna provided to the Israelites in the wilderness with Himself as the true Bread of Life, sent by the Father to give eternal life to the world.
- Jesus reveals that He is the fulfillment of God's provision, offering spiritual nourishment and eternal life to all who believe in Him.

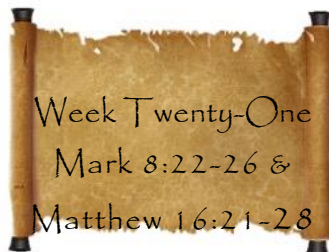
Jesus Stresses the Necessity of Belief to Experience Eternal Life

- In John 6:40 and throughout the passage, Jesus repeatedly emphasizes that eternal life is given to those who see and believe in Him as the One sent by the Father.
- Jesus teaches that eternal life is not earned but received through faith in Him, redirecting focus from human effort to trusting in His divine work.

Jesus' Teaching About His Flesh and Blood Point to Deeper Spiritual Truth

- In John 6:53-58, Jesus says that eating His flesh and drinking His blood is necessary for eternal life, shocking His audience. While many interpret this literally, Jesus is pointing to the spiritual reality of abiding in Him through faith.
- Jesus uses provocative language to highlight the depth of union He offers, inviting believers to partake in His life, sacrifice, and resurrection power.

These insights reveal Jesus as the ultimate spiritual sustenance, the provider of eternal life, and the One who calls for deep, abiding faith. This passage challenges followers to move beyond surface-level understanding and embrace the transformative relationship He offers.



Mark 8:22-26 (the healing of the blind man at Bethsaida) and Matthew 16:21-28 (Jesus predicting His death and the call to discipleship) reveal key aspects of Jesus' mission, teaching, and character. Here are four easily missed insights from these passages:

Jesus Uses Gradual Healing to Teach Spiritual

Lessons

- In Mark 8:22-26, Jesus heals a blind man in two stages: first, the man sees people as blurry figures, and then he gains full clarity. This unique two-step process mirrors the disciples' growing understanding of who Jesus is.
- Jesus is patient with spiritual growth, showing that clarity in understanding Him often comes in stages as faith and insight mature.

Jesus Shifts Focus to His Mission of Suffering and Redemption

- In Matthew 16:21, Jesus begins to explicitly teach His disciples about His upcoming suffering, death, and resurrection. This marks a turning point in His ministry.
- Jesus intentionally prepares His followers for the realities of His mission, emphasizing that suffering and sacrifice are central to God's redemptive plan.

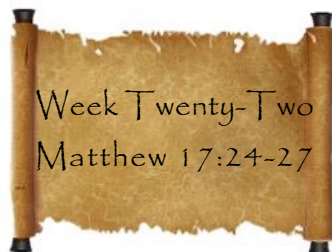
Jesus Rebukes Misguided Zeal That Opposes God's Plan

- When Peter tries to dissuade Jesus from going to the cross, Jesus sharply rebukes him, calling him a stumbling block and aligning his thinking with human, not divine, priorities (Matthew 16:22-23).
- Jesus prioritizes obedience to God's will over human desires, even when they come from those closest to Him, showing the importance of aligning with God's purposes.

Jesus Calls for Total Commitment in Discipleship

- In Matthew 16:24-26, Jesus challenges His followers to deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow Him, explaining that true life is found in surrendering earthly gains for His sake.
- Jesus presents discipleship as a call to self-sacrifice and eternal perspective, emphasizing that following Him requires complete commitment and trust in the eternal value of His mission.

These insights highlight Jesus as a patient teacher, a resolute Savior, and a demanding yet loving Lord who calls His followers to align with His redemptive mission and embrace the cost of discipleship.



Matthew 17:24-27 (The Temple Tax)

This passage tells of Jesus instructing Peter to pay the temple tax by miraculously providing a coin from a fish.

Jesus Affirms Both Divine Authority and Earthly

Responsibility

- Jesus questions Peter, showing that as God's Son, He is exempt from paying the temple tax, yet He still instructs Peter to pay it to avoid causing offense (Matthew 17:25-27).
- Jesus balances His divine authority with a practical example of humility and submission to earthly systems when it does not compromise His mission.

Jesus Provides Miraculously to Meet Needs

- The coin found in the fish's mouth emphasizes Jesus' ability to provide in unexpected ways, even for mundane needs like taxes.

- Jesus demonstrates His sovereignty over creation and His care for His followers by providing for their practical needs.

Jesus Teaches Through Subtle Actions

- By paying the tax, Jesus avoids unnecessary conflict while modeling a lesson about freedom and humility to Peter.
- Jesus often uses seemingly small actions to teach profound truths about living peacefully and graciously in the world.

Jesus Demonstrates His Divine Knowledge

- Jesus knows exactly where the needed coin is, revealing His omniscience and power.
- This story highlights Jesus' intimate involvement in the details of His followers' lives, showing He is fully aware of their situations.



Luke 10:25-42 (The Good Samaritan & Mary and Martha)

This section includes Jesus' teaching on loving one's neighbor through the parable of the Good Samaritan and the story of Mary and Martha.

Jesus Redefines Neighborly Love

- In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Jesus challenges cultural boundaries by making the Samaritan a despised outsider- the hero who fulfills the command to love.
- He reveals that neighborly love transcends ethnicity, religion, and social norms, calling for compassion toward anyone in need.

Jesus Exposes Self-Justification

- The lawyer's question, "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10:29), attempts to limit his responsibility. Jesus' response expands the definition of a neighbor.
- Jesus confronts self-justifying attitudes and calls people to embrace a broader, more sacrificial understanding of love.

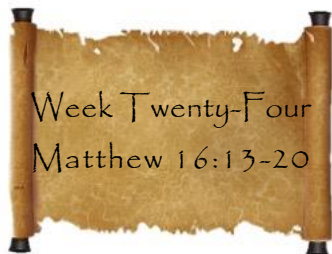
Jesus Values Presence Over Productivity

- In the story of Mary and Martha (Luke 10:38-42), Jesus commends Mary for choosing to sit at His feet and listen, rather than being preoccupied with tasks like Martha.
- He emphasizes that time spent in His presence and listening to His word is more important than being consumed by busyness, even with good or necessary tasks.

Jesus Invites Both Men and Women to Discipleship

- By affirming Mary's choice to sit at His feet, Jesus defies cultural norms and extends the role of disciple, traditionally reserved for men, to women.
- He highlights the inclusive nature of His teaching and ministry, breaking down barriers to spiritual growth for all.

Together, these passages reveal Jesus as a wise teacher, a compassionate provider, and a Savior who challenges cultural norms to elevate love, humility, and wholehearted devotion to God.



Matthew 16:13-20 (Peter's Confession of Christ)

This passage captures Peter's declaration of Jesus as the Messiah and Jesus' response, revealing key truths about His identity and mission.

Jesus Draws Out a Personal Revelation of His Identity

- Jesus asks, "*Who do you say I am?*" (Matthew 16:15), inviting the disciples to move from hearsay to personal conviction. Peter responds with a Spirit-inspired confession of Jesus as the Messiah.
- Jesus values personal faith and understanding, emphasizing that true recognition of Him comes through divine revelation—not human reasoning alone.

Jesus Declares the Church's Foundation

- Jesus affirms Peter's confession, saying, "*On this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it*" (Matthew 16:18).

- He establishes that the Church is built on the foundation of His identity as the Christ and the faith of those who acknowledge Him, ensuring its enduring victory.

Jesus Grants Spiritual Authority

- Jesus gives Peter the “*keys of the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 16:19), symbolizing the authority to bind and loose.
- This act reflects the spiritual authority Jesus entrusts to His followers, along with the responsibility to advance His kingdom on earth.

Jesus Calls for Discretion Regarding His Identity

- Jesus instructs the disciples not to tell anyone that He is the Messiah (Matthew 16:20).
- He manages the timing of His public revelation, aware that premature declarations could lead to misunderstandings or provoke early conflict with religious and political leaders.



Mark 9:2-13 (The Transfiguration)

This passage describes the transfiguration of Jesus, where He reveals His divine glory to Peter, James, and John, along with the appearance of Moses and Elijah.

Jesus Reveals His Divine Glory as a Foretaste of His Kingdom

- Jesus is transfigured, and His clothes become dazzling white (Mark 9:2-3). This moment offers a glimpse of His glorified state and ultimate triumph.
- He reveals that He is not only the suffering Messiah but also the glorified Son of God, offering reassurance of His divine authority and future victory.

Jesus Fulfills the Law and the Prophets

- Moses and Elijah—representing the Law and the Prophets—appear and speak with Jesus (Mark 9:4).
- Their presence underscores that Jesus fulfills the Old Testament promises, bringing God's redemptive plan to completion.

The Father's Voice affirms Jesus

- A voice from the cloud declares, “*This is My Son, whom I love. Listen to Him!*” (Mark 9:7).
- The Father’s affirmation reinforces Jesus’ divine sonship and authority, urging the disciples to prioritize His teaching and mission above all else.

Jesus Points to Suffering Before Glory

- As they descend the mountain, Jesus instructs the disciples not to share what they have seen until after His resurrection and speaks about the suffering of the Son of Man (Mark 9:9-12).
- He emphasizes that the path to glory leads through suffering, aligning with God’s plan and challenging the disciples to embrace this reality.

Think with me about the voice of the Father about the son. The father was please with the son before he did any work he came to do while on teh earth. That speaks volumes to us today. It's not our work but our identity in Christ that pleases the Fatehr.

These verses reveal Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God, fully divine and fully human. They highlight His mission to fulfill the Scriptures, establish His Church, and prepare His followers to navigate the tension between present suffering and future glory.



Luke 11:1-13 (The Lord’s Prayer and Teaching on Prayer)

In this passage, Jesus teaches His disciples how to pray and encourages them to persist in prayer, offering profound insights into God’s character and the nature of prayer.

Jesus Models a Life of Prayer

- The passage begins with Jesus in prayer, prompting one of His disciples to ask, “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).
- Jesus’ consistent example highlights the central role of prayer in His life and ministry, underscoring the importance of cultivating a personal and regular prayer life.

Jesus Provides a Framework for Prayer, Not Just a Formula

- In the Lord’s Prayer (Luke 11:2-4), Jesus offers a simple yet profound model that emphasizes our reverence for God, alignment with His will, provision, forgiveness, and spiritual protection.
- He shifts the focus from rote recitation to prayer priorities—acknowledging God’s sovereignty, seeking His kingdom, and trusting Him for daily and eternal needs.

Jesus Stresses the Importance of Persistence in Prayer

- Through the parable of the persistent friend (Luke 11:5-8), Jesus illustrates the power of perseverance, showing that even a reluctant neighbor will respond to persistent requests.
- Jesus urges His followers to pray boldly and persistently, trusting that God is far more willing to respond than any reluctant human.

Jesus Reveals God as a Generous and Good Father

- Jesus compares earthly fathers giving good gifts to their children with the heavenly Father giving the Holy Spirit to those who ask (Luke 11:11-13).
- He assures His followers of God’s goodness, portraying Him as a loving Father who delights in providing what is best, especially the gift of His Spirit, to His children.

This passage invites believers to approach God with confidence, perseverance, and trust in His generous provision and loving character.

Prayer is a lifestyle: Jesus models prayer as a natural and vital part of a relationship with God.

Focus on God’s priorities: The Lord’s Prayer guides believers to align their hearts with God’s will.

Pray persistently: Persistence in prayer reflects faith, dependence, and trust in God’s timing.

Trust in God's goodness: Jesus presents God as a generous Father eager to bless His children, especially with His Spirit.



John 11:1-4 (The Raising of Lazarus)

This passage recounts the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead, revealing profound truths about His power, love, and mission.

Jesus' Timing Reflects God's Greater Purpose

- When Jesus hears about Lazarus's illness, He delays going to Bethany, explaining that the sickness will not end in death but is for the glory of God (John 11:4–6).
- Jesus operates according to divine timing, prioritizing God's glory and the strengthening of faith over immediate relief—even when His delay brings confusion or pain.

Jesus Balances Divine Power with Human Compassion

- Though He knows He will raise Lazarus, Jesus is deeply moved by Mary's grief and weeps alongside the mourners (John 11:33–35).
- Jesus demonstrates both His divine authority and His deep empathy, showing that God is not distant but intimately present in human suffering.

Jesus Reveals Himself as the Source of Life

- In His conversation with Martha, Jesus declares, *"I am the resurrection and the life"* (John 11:25–26), calling her to believe in Him.
- He shifts the focus from an event (resurrection) to a person—Himself—inviting trust in Him as the source of both present transformation and eternal hope.

Jesus Displays His Authority Over Death

- Jesus commands Lazarus to come out of the tomb, and Lazarus is restored to life (John 11:43-44). This act displays Jesus' power over death, the ultimate human enemy.
- It foreshadows His own resurrection and reveals the victory He offers to all who believe in Him.

God's timing serves a higher purpose: Jesus delays for the sake of God's glory and the disciples' faith, reminding us that divine delays often lead to greater outcomes.

God empathizes with human pain: Jesus' compassion shows that divine power is never detached from human sorrow.

Life is found in Jesus: Jesus' self-revelation as "*the resurrection and the life*" centers hope not in circumstances, but in His person.

Victory over death: Lazarus's resurrection foreshadows Christ's own and assures believers of ultimate victory through Him.

This passage calls believers to trust in Jesus' timing, rest in His compassion, and place unwavering faith in His life-giving power—even in the face of death and despair.



Luke 15:11-32 (The Parable of the Prodigal Son)

This parable, one of Jesus' most well-known teachings, explores themes of repentance, grace, and the character of God as a loving Father. Beneath the familiar story lie deeper insights into the relationships and motivations of the characters.

The Younger Son's Actions Reflect the Depth of Human Rebellion

- By asking for his inheritance early (Luke 15:12), the younger son essentially wishes his father dead, showing profound disrespect. Yet, the father grants his request.
- The younger son's demand illustrates the extreme nature of human sin—seeking independence from God while disregarding the relational cost. The father's willingness to comply demonstrates God's respect for human freedom.

The Father's Love Is Scandalously Extravagant

- When the younger son returns, the father runs to greet him, embraces him, and restores him with a robe, ring, and feast (Luke 15:20-24).
- The father's response highlights God's readiness to forgive and restore repentant sinners without hesitation or reserve, emphasizing His grace over human merit.

The Elder Son Reveals Self-Righteousness and Resentment

- The elder son's anger at the celebration (Luke 15:28-30) exposes his transactional view of his relationship with the father, based on performance rather than love.
- The elder son symbolizes those who rely on works or morality to earn favor, missing the joy of God's grace and the depth of relationship He offers.

The Parable Leaves an Open Invitation

- The father pleads with the elder son to join the celebration, emphasizing that everything the father has is already his (Luke 15:31-32). The story ends without revealing the elder son's choice.
- The unresolved conclusion invites self-reflection, challenging both "prodigals" and "elder brothers" to consider their response to God's grace and their role in His kingdom.

Summary of Insights

1. **Sin is relational, not just behavioral:** The younger son's rebellion and the elder son's resentment both highlight distorted relationships with the father, emphasizing that sin breaks fellowship with God.
2. **God's grace defies human expectations:** The father's lavish forgiveness and celebration demonstrate that God's love transcends human understanding of justice and fairness.
3. **Self-righteousness is just as dangerous as rebellion:** The elder son's refusal to celebrate reveals that proximity to the father without love leads to bitterness and alienation.
4. **The story invites personal reflection:** The open ending urges readers to evaluate their own relationship with God, whether as a prodigal needing repentance or an elder brother needing grace.

This parable captures the heart of the gospel, showcasing God's extravagant grace and the transformative power of His love for all who return to Him.



Luke 16:19-31 (The Rich Man and Lazarus)

This parable contrasts the earthly lives and eternal destinies of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus, revealing profound truths about justice, repentance, and the kingdom of God.

1. Earthly Status Does Not Reflect Eternal Worth

- The rich man lives in luxury while Lazarus suffers in poverty and sickness at his gate (Luke 16:19-21). After death, their roles are reversed: Lazarus is comforted, and the rich man is in torment (Luke 16:22-23).
- The parable exposes the fallacy of equating earthly wealth or status with divine favor, emphasizing that material possessions do not determine eternal destiny.

2. Indifference to Suffering Carries Eternal Consequences

- The rich man's sin is not explicitly described, but his neglect of Lazarus, who was visibly in need, underscores his lack of compassion.
- Jesus highlights the moral responsibility to care for those in need, warning that ignoring the suffering of others leads to eternal accountability.

3. Eternal Realities Are Fixed and Irreversible

- The rich man is separated from Lazarus by a great chasm that cannot be crossed (Luke 16:26). His pleas for relief and warning to his family are denied.
- The parable underscores the permanence of one's eternal destiny, emphasizing the urgency of repentance and faith during one's earthly life.

4. God's Word Is Sufficient for Repentance

- The rich man asks Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers, but Abraham responds that they have Moses and the Prophets (Luke 16:27-31).
- Jesus teaches that Scripture provides all the guidance needed for repentance and faith. Miraculous signs alone are insufficient to change a hardened heart.

Summary of Insights

1. **Wealth is not a measure of righteousness:** The rich man's comfort in life does not translate to favor with God, while Lazarus' suffering leads to eternal comfort.
2. **Compassion matters:** Neglecting the needs of others reflects a heart far from God and has eternal consequences.

3. **Eternal judgment is final:** The parable emphasizes the urgency of addressing spiritual matters before it is too late.
4. **Scripture is sufficient:** God's Word is the ultimate and sufficient revelation for leading people to repentance and salvation.

This parable calls believers to evaluate their priorities, embrace a heart of compassion, and heed the warnings of Scripture to prepare for eternity.



Mark 10:17-31 (The Rich Young Ruler)

This passage tells the story of a man who asks Jesus about eternal life but struggles to follow Him fully due to his attachment to wealth. It provides deep insights into discipleship, priorities, and God's grace.

1. Goodness is Defined by God, Not Human Standards

- The man addresses Jesus as "Good Teacher," and Jesus replies, "No one is good—except God alone" (Mark 10:17-18).
- Jesus redirects the man's understanding of goodness, emphasizing that true goodness is found in God and His standards, not human accomplishments or morality.

2. Following Jesus Requires Radical Surrender

- Jesus tells the man to sell all he has, give to the poor, and follow Him (Mark 10:21). The man leaves sorrowful because of his great wealth.
- Jesus reveals that discipleship demands a willingness to relinquish anything that competes with total allegiance to Him, exposing the heart's true priorities.

3. Wealth is a Barrier to Kingdom Entry, But Not an Impossibility

- Jesus declares that it is hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God, comparing it to a camel passing through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:23-25). Yet He adds, "With God all things are possible" (Mark 10:27).
- Wealth often fosters self-reliance and distraction from God, but salvation is ultimately a divine work, possible only through God's grace.

4. Sacrificial Following is Rewarded with Eternal Riches

- Jesus promises that those who leave everything for His sake will receive blessings in this life, along with persecutions, and eternal life in the age to come (Mark 10:29-30).

- Jesus assures His followers that sacrificial obedience is not in vain, promising eternal rewards and spiritual abundance that far outweigh earthly losses.

Summary of Insights

1. **God defines true goodness:** Eternal life cannot be achieved through human morality but is rooted in God's character and grace.
2. **Discipleship demands surrender:** Jesus calls for wholehearted commitment, asking His followers to prioritize Him over material possessions.
3. **Salvation is God's work:** While wealth creates obstacles, God's power and grace can overcome human limitations.
4. **Eternal rewards outweigh earthly sacrifices:** Jesus promises that forsaking worldly security for His sake leads to spiritual blessings and eternal life.

This passage challenges believers to examine their hearts, trust in God's grace, and embrace the call to radical discipleship, trusting in the eternal rewards of following Jesus.



Week Thirty-One: Luke 19:45-48 & Matthew 25:1-30

The Luke passage contains a very familiar main point. Jesus drives out the money changers, declaring, “*My house will be a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of robbers.*”

This is commonly seen as righteous anger over corruption in the temple.

1. **It is important to note here that the Temple was not just misused—it was repurposed.**
The people had not just allowed commerce in the temple; they had redefined its purpose. Jesus' quote from Isaiah 56:7 reminds us that the temple was meant to serve all nations ("a house of prayer for all nations"), and yet those selling and profiting were obstructing that purpose.
2. **Jesus was asserting His authority over the *entire religious system*.**
This wasn't just a moral protest; it was a messianic claim. He was purifying the temple in the way a king would cleanse his palace. It was an acted-out parable declaring that He had come not to reform the temple system, but to replace it. His efforts were not to destroy but to bring to fullness the intent of the Father.

3. **Verse 47: “He was teaching daily in the temple.”**

After such a bold act, we might expect Jesus to be driven away. Instead, He continues *teaching* there. The people’s willingness to listen shows His magnetic authority—even after upending the system. This contrast heightens the threat He posed to the chief priests.

4. **The leaders’ response: “They could not find a way to kill Him, because all the people were hanging on His words.”**

This highlights the deep divide: a corrupt leadership fearing loss of control and a spiritually hungry people desperate for truth. The clash is not just over theology, but over allegiance and authority.

Matthew 25:1–30 — Parables of the Ten Virgins and the Talents

The parable of the ten virgins teaches readiness for Christ’s return, while the parable of the talents emphasizes faithful stewardship.

Parable of the Ten Virgins (vv. 1–13)

1. **All ten virgins had lamps and fell asleep.**

Sleep is not the issue—*readiness* is. Both wise and foolish virgins were sleeping when the bridegroom came, which suggests that it’s not constant activity but preparation that matters.

2. **The wise couldn’t share their oil.**

This suggests that spiritual preparedness (intimacy with Christ, maturity, discipline) is not transferable. Each person must cultivate their own relationship with God.

3. **The door was *shut*.**

This sharp detail speaks to finality. In our age of second chances, this detail underscores the urgency of readiness—there is a point when it will be too late.

Parable of the Talents (vv. 14–30)

1. **The master gives talents “each according to his ability.”**

This shows the master *knows* his servants intimately. The distribution isn’t arbitrary—it’s tailored. God’s expectations are aligned with His unique design for each person.

2. **The two faithful servants receive the *same commendation* (“Well done...”)**

Despite different amounts of return, both are rewarded equally. God values faithfulness, not comparison or performance.

3. **The wicked servant’s view of the master as harsh drives his fear.**

His inaction is rooted in a *distorted view of God*. This implies that how we view God deeply affects how we serve Him.

4. **“Take the talent from him... and throw that worthless servant outside.”**
The final judgment hinges not on gross immorality but on *wasted opportunity*. This is a sober reminder that omission can be just as damning as commission.



Week Thirty-Two: Mark 14:12-31

“Prepared, Betrayed, Still Worshiping”

Scripture Focus: Mark 14:12–31

Key Verse: *“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.” (Mark 14:26)*

On the eve of His crucifixion, Jesus was not scrambling to respond to chaos—He was calmly leading the way, step by step, in a plan that was unfolding precisely as God intended. From the pre-arranged upper room to the intimate Last Supper, every detail reflected divine foreknowledge and care.

Yet in the very room where love was being poured out, betrayal was already in motion. What’s shocking is that Jesus doesn’t lash out—He extends grace, even to Judas. He serves bread and wine not with bitterness, but with thanksgiving, knowing full well what they symbolized: His suffering and death.

And then... they sang. Not a dirge, not a lament—but likely one of the Hallel Psalms (113–118), *full of words like:*

“This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Jesus rejoiced with His disciples in the shadow of the cross. Worship was not cancelled by hardship—it was intensified by it.

Even Peter, who declared he would never deny Jesus, was included in that worship. Jesus knew Peter would fall. And still, He let him sing. He let him stay. Because grace doesn’t give up on us at our worst—it calls us forward into restoration.

So now, let’s apply what I have shared

- Where do you need to **trust God’s preparation** even when things feel uncertain?
- Are there relationships in your life where betrayal or disappointment has made you hesitant to extend grace?
- Can you still **sing in the dark**, trusting that joy is coming?

Jesus invites us to trust Him—not only when things are well, but when they’re unraveling. Because even in betrayal, even in denial, even in suffering—He is still Lord. And He is still leading us forward.

“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies...” —Psalm 23:5

Mark 14:12–31 covers the preparation for the Passover, the Last Supper, Jesus’ prediction of His betrayal, and His foretelling of Peter’s denial. While much of this passage is familiar and frequently taught, it also contains **easily overlooked insights** that reveal deep truths about Jesus’ heart, the nature of discipleship, and God’s sovereignty in suffering.

Mark 14:12–31 – The Last Supper & Betrayal Foretold

Verses 12–16 – Preparation for the Passover

1. Jesus is already in control of the unknown.

“A man carrying a jar of water will meet you...” (v. 13)

- Culturally, men didn’t typically carry water jars—this would stand out. It implies that **Jesus has made detailed prior arrangements**, demonstrating divine foresight and orchestration.
- It’s a subtle reminder: even when His suffering is imminent, **Jesus is not a victim of circumstance**, but sovereign over every step.

2. The “upper room” was “furnished and ready.”

- The host had prepared the room before Jesus and the disciples arrived. **God often prepares provision before His people even arrive at the place of need.**

Verses 17–21 – Jesus Predicts His Betrayer

3. Betrayal happens in close proximity.

“One who is eating with me.” (v. 18)

- The pain isn’t just the betrayal—it’s that it comes from someone sharing a sacred table. This fulfills Psalm 41:9 and shows that spiritual intimacy does not always equate to spiritual loyalty.

4. Each disciple questions themselves: “Is it I?”

- None immediately suspects Judas. That’s telling. It shows:
 - Judas had effectively masked his betrayal.

- The disciples were aware of their own weaknesses. **True disciples are humble enough to question their own hearts** rather than immediately blame others.

5. Jesus does not name Judas explicitly.

- This is gracious restraint. Jesus confronts the betrayal but doesn't expose Judas publicly in that moment. This highlights **Jesus' patience, mercy, and the opportunity for repentance—even for the betrayer.**

Verses 22–25 – Institution of the Lord's Supper

6. Jesus gives thanks *before* the suffering.

“He took bread, and when he had given thanks...” (v. 22)

- Jesus expresses gratitude while knowing what the bread and cup symbolize—His broken body and shed blood. **Thanksgiving in the face of suffering is a mark of spiritual maturity and surrender.**

7. The Lord's Supper is deeply relational.

- Jesus doesn't just give elements; He says:

“This is my body... This is my blood... poured out for many.”

- This personal identification shows that **the cross is not a mechanical transaction, but an act of deep covenant love.**

8. Jesus promises future fellowship.

“I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day...” (v. 25)

- Even as He faces the cross, Jesus speaks of a future reunion. This looks forward to the **marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9)**—a reminder that the cross leads to celebration, not just sorrow.

Verses 26–31 – Prediction of Peter's Denial

9. They sang a hymn before going to the Mount of Olives.

“And when they had sung a hymn...” (v. 26)

- Likely part of the Hallel (Psalms 113–118), which includes:

“The Lord is my strength and my song; He has become my salvation.”

- Jesus sang **about salvation while walking toward suffering**. Worship is not bound by circumstance but by perspective.

10. Jesus quotes Zechariah 13:7 to show God’s hand even in the scattering.

“I will strike the shepherd...” (v. 27)

- Jesus interprets His suffering as **the fulfillment of Scripture**—even the painful parts are under divine providence.

11. Peter’s zeal is sincere—but insufficient.

“Even if all fall away, I will not.” (v. 29)

- Peter wasn’t lying—he was overconfident in his own strength. His fall was tragic, but it started with misplaced confidence.
 - **Overconfidence in ourselves is a quiet danger in discipleship.**



Week Thirty-Three: John 13

John 13 is one of the most intimate and theologically rich chapters in the Gospels. It begins the “Upper Room Discourse,” where Jesus prepares His disciples for His departure. The chapter includes the **foot washing, the betrayal prediction, and the new commandment**. While

many are familiar with its central themes of humility and love, several **easily overlooked insights** offer deeper understanding:

1. Verse 1 – Jesus loved them “to the end”

“Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.”

The phrase “to the end” (Greek: *eis telos*) doesn’t just mean “until the end of His life”—it also carries the sense of **to the uttermost**, completely, perfectly. This signals the **depth** of Jesus’ love, not just its duration. Jesus doesn’t love us merely for a season or until we fail—He loves us fully, completely, and sacrificially.

2. Verse 3 – Jesus washed feet from a place of authority, not inferiority

“Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands...”

Jesus was fully aware of His divine authority and identity **before** He stooped to wash their feet.

He wasn't forced into humility; He **chose** it from a place of strength. True humility doesn't come from insecurity or weakness—it flows from a secure identity in God.

3. Verses 6–8 – Peter resists being served

“You shall never wash my feet.”

Peter's refusal wasn't just pride; it reveals how difficult it is for us to receive undeserved grace. Accepting that Jesus must cleanse us requires acknowledging we cannot cleanse ourselves. Sometimes it's harder to receive grace than to give it. But unless we allow Christ to serve and cleanse us, we cannot have part with Him.

4. Verse 10 – “You are clean... though not every one of you.”

“And you are clean, though not every one of you.”

Jesus knew Judas was among them and still **washed his feet**. He included him in the same act of love and humility as the others. Jesus shows love to His enemies—not just passively, but actively, intimately. Can we love those who are in the process of betraying us?

5. Verses 21–27 – The way Judas is exposed is quiet and personal

“It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread...”

Jesus didn't expose Judas to the group in a humiliating way. He identifies him in a veiled gesture, giving him a piece of bread—a sign of **friendship and hospitality** in that culture. Even in confrontation, Jesus acts with dignity and grace. His goal is redemption, not public shame.

6. Verse 30 – “And it was night.”

“As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.”

John is likely doing more than reporting the time of day. “It was night” symbolizes the **spiritual darkness** Judas entered. He stepped away from the Light (Jesus) and chose darkness. Spiritual decisions often move us toward light or deeper darkness. Every step away from Jesus leads into the night.

7. Verses 34–35 – The “new commandment” is not new in action, but in degree

“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”

The Old Testament already commanded love. What's “new” is **the standard**: *“as I have loved*

you.” That means sacrificially, unconditionally, even for enemies. Jesus isn’t asking for affection—He’s calling for **Christlike love** that lays down ego, rights, and even life for others.



Week Thirty-Four: John 14

John 14 is part of Jesus’ intimate farewell discourse (John 13–17), filled with comfort, instruction, and theological richness. While its central themes— *“I am the way, the truth, and the life”* and *the promise of the Holy Spirit*—are widely known, there are many **easily overlooked insights** that deepen our understanding of Jesus’ mission and His call to faithful trust.

1. Verse 1 – “Let not your hearts be troubled...”

“Believe in God; believe also in me.”

Jesus is about to face betrayal, trial, and crucifixion—but *He’s comforting them*. His concern is not for Himself, but for their peace. True love is others-centered, even in personal crisis. How do we care for others when we’re under pressure?

2. Verse 2 – “In my Father’s house are many rooms...”

Jesus uses “my Father’s house” language, which was previously used for the *temple* (see John 2:16). Now He applies it to *heaven*, showing that the **dwelling place of God is expanding**, not shrinking. The “many rooms” imply intimate and permanent *belonging*. Heaven isn’t a hotel—it’s home. The Father’s presence is personal, spacious, and secure for each believer.

3. Verse 4–5 – “You know the way...” / Thomas says, “We don’t.”

Jesus says, “You know the way,” but the disciples feel lost. This tension reveals that sometimes we **know more than we realize**, and that faith often grows in hindsight. Discipleship includes trusting Jesus even when clarity is lacking. Obedience can precede understanding.

4. Verse 6 – “I am the way, and the truth, and the life...”

Jesus doesn’t say He *knows* the way—He *is* the way. This is not just a roadmap; it’s a relationship. And the definite article “*the*” makes an exclusive claim. There are not many ways to the Father—there is One. Christianity isn’t fundamentally about principles—it’s about a Person. Following Jesus is not merely belief; it’s union with Him.

5. Verses 8–9 – Philip asks, “Show us the Father.”

After years with Jesus, Philip still doesn’t see that **to see Jesus is to see God**. Jesus gently rebukes this misunderstanding. Even faithful followers can hold incomplete views of Christ’s identity. We grow into a fuller understanding of who Jesus is. Don’t assume your current view is complete—keep seeking deeper revelation of Christ.

6. Verses 12–14 – “Greater works than these will you do...”

The “greater works” don’t mean more powerful miracles, but *broader reach*. Jesus’ earthly ministry was geographically limited, but the Spirit-empowered Church would reach the world. Your impact in Christ may look ordinary but carry eternal weight. Don’t limit “greater works” to dramatic signs—think global mission and gospel transformation.

7. Verses 16–17 – “Another Helper... the Spirit of truth”

The word “another” (*allos*) means “another of the **same kind**.” The Holy Spirit is not a downgrade from Jesus—He is God with us in a new way. Jesus isn’t leaving us with less; He’s giving us *His own presence* through the Spirit. We are not spiritually orphaned. The Holy Spirit is the ever-present, empowering, truth-guiding presence of Christ.

8. Verse 21 – Love and obedience are inseparable

“Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me...” This reveals that love for Christ is not sentimental—it is active. **Obedience is the evidence of love**, not a substitute for grace, but its fruit. Measure your love for Christ not by emotion alone, but by your responsiveness to His Word.

9. Verse 27 – “Peace I leave with you... not as the world gives”

Jesus distinguishes **His peace** from worldly peace. The world’s peace is circumstantial; His peace is anchored in relationship. This is a peace that *sustains* through trouble, not one that avoids it. If your peace evaporates with difficulty, it’s probably not from Christ. Seek the deep, sustaining peace only He can give.



Week Thirty-Five: John 17

John 17 is often called “**The High Priestly Prayer**”—a unique, sacred moment where we hear **Jesus praying to the Father** just before His arrest. It is the longest recorded prayer of Jesus in Scripture and offers a profound window into His heart. While the themes of unity, glory, and sanctification are well known, there are several **easily overlooked insights** that deepen its richness and relevance.

1. Verse 1 – Jesus lifts His eyes to heaven

“He lifted up his eyes to heaven and said...”

This posture of prayer (lifting the eyes) reflects **confidence and communion**, not desperation or doubt. Jesus is about to suffer, yet His gaze is upward—not inward. Even in your darkest hour, look *up* in prayer. Our perspective in suffering matters—prayer lifts us out of self-focus into God-focus.

2. Verse 3 – Eternal life is relational, not just endless

“This is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.”

Eternal life isn’t defined by duration, but by **intimate knowledge of God**. It's not merely "life after death," but **life in deep communion with God—starting now**. Are you living eternal life now through relationship with God, or are you merely waiting for it in the future?

3. Verse 4 – Jesus says, “I glorified You... I accomplished the work” (before the cross)

“I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do.”

Jesus speaks in past tense—though the cross hasn’t happened yet. Why? Because His **obedience to the Father up to this point** was already glorifying God. The cross was the climax, not the starting point. Daily obedience glorifies God—not just the dramatic moments. Faithfulness in hidden things is part of the "finished work."

4. Verse 6 – “I have manifested Your name...”

“I have manifested your name to the people whom you gave me...”

Jesus didn’t merely teach theology—He revealed the **character** of God ("name" in Jewish thought = essence, identity). His life was an **embodied revelation** of the Father. Your life can preach louder than your words. Are you revealing God’s character in how you live?

5. Verse 9 – “I am not praying for the world...”

This isn't a lack of love for the world—Jesus died for it. But here, Jesus is interceding **specifically** for those who belong to Him. There is a special intimacy and protection reserved for His people. Belonging to Christ places you under His personal intercession. That's not exclusionary—it's deeply relational.

6. Verse 10 – “I am glorified in them.”

“All mine are yours... and I am glorified in them.”

Jesus sees glory **already present** in His flawed disciples. He doesn't say, “I will be glorified once they get it together”—but “*I am glorified in them.*” God is glorified in your *ongoing*, imperfect walk when you abide in Christ. He sees your present value, not just your potential.

7. Verse 11 – “Holy Father, keep them...”

“Holy Father, keep them in your name...”

Jesus doesn't pray for escape but for preservation. He prays that we'd be **kept in God's name**—that is, preserved in identity, unity, and mission—even in a hostile world. Ask not just for relief from trouble, but for faithfulness in it. God's keeping power is more precious than temporary comfort.

8. Verse 17 – “Sanctify them by the truth...”

Jesus doesn't say "by grace" or "by love" here, but “by truth.” Truth is the **agent of transformation**. In an age of feelings and personal preferences, this is radical. Sanctification requires submitting to God's Word, not just experiencing His love.

9. Verse 20 – Jesus prays for *you*

“I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word...” You are in this prayer. Jesus looked through time and saw your faith. His intercession **spans history and includes future disciples**—a staggering reality. You are not forgotten or anonymous. You are personally known and prayed for by the Savior.

10. Verses 22–23 – Glory given to us for unity

“The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one...”

Jesus gives His glory—not for status or individual spirituality—but **for the purpose of unity**. This is countercultural: glory that leads to **oneness**, not platforming. If your experience of glory divides rather than unites, it may not be the glory Jesus meant.

11. Verse 24 – Jesus *desires* to be with us

“Father, I desire that they also... may be with me where I am...”

Jesus doesn’t just tolerate us—He *longs* for us. He wants us in His presence. This is a prayer of love, not just duty.

Live like someone Jesus deeply desires to be with—not as a distant servant but as a beloved companion.

12. Verse 26 – “I made known to them your name... and will continue to make it known...”

Jesus is not done revealing the Father—even after His death and resurrection. His work of **ongoing revelation** continues through the Spirit (John 16:13–14).

Don’t settle for what you already know of God. Jesus is still revealing the Father to you—keep seeking, keep growing.



Week Thirty-Six: Matthew 26:36-56

Matthew 26:36–56—which covers Jesus’ **anguish in Gethsemane and His arrest**—is often read quickly, focusing on the emotional intensity or betrayal by Judas. But this rich passage contains several **easily overlooked insights** that speak deeply into spiritual formation, discipleship, and

our understanding of Jesus.

1. Verse 36 – “Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane”

“Gethsemane” means *oil press*—a place where olives are crushed to release oil. Jesus goes to a place of **crushing** before the cross. Before spiritual power (oil) is released, there is often a season of pressure. **Anointing often follows crushing.**

2. Verse 37 – “He began to be sorrowful and troubled”

Jesus was not immune to anguish. This moment reveals His **full humanity**—a Savior who doesn’t skip suffering but walks straight into it. You don’t have to fake strength in prayer. Even Jesus was overwhelmed. Real faith brings real emotion before God.

3. Verse 38 – “Remain here and watch with me”

Jesus asks for companionship, not protection. He wants His closest friends **near** in His moment of anguish—not to fix it, but to *watch with Him*. Sometimes the most Christlike thing you can do is simply be present with someone in pain.

4. Verse 39 – “My Father, if it be possible... yet not as I will”

Jesus **wrestled** with the Father’s will. He didn’t immediately say, “Yes.” The submission came through prayer and internal struggle. It’s not unspiritual to wrestle. Submission to God often requires time and deep honesty.

5. Verse 40 – “Could you not watch with me one hour?”

Jesus didn’t rebuke them for abandoning Him—*yet*. He rebukes them for **sleeping in the hour of spiritual need**. The disciples underestimated the moment they were in. Spiritual lethargy during critical moments is dangerous. Ask: **Am I spiritually awake when it matters most?**

6. Verse 41 – “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”

Jesus doesn’t shame them—He **acknowledges their limits**. He affirms their desire but also their humanity. Jesus meets you with both truth and compassion. He knows your intentions *and* your weaknesses—and invites you to keep watching and praying.

7. Verses 42–44 – Jesus prayed the same thing three times

Jesus didn’t feel the need to invent new words. He repeated His plea—because that’s where He truly was. Repetitive prayer isn’t a lack of faith—it can be the **deepening** of faith. God welcomes honest persistence.

8. Verse 45 – “Sleep and take your rest later on”

This may be **sarcastic or resigned**. Jesus essentially says, “The moment has come—you missed it.” Their window for alertness and partnership had passed. Some moments can’t be regained. Stay spiritually alert—don’t sleep through your calling.

9. Verse 50 – “Friend, do what you came to do”

Jesus calls **Judas “friend”** even as he betrays Him. Jesus remains composed, gracious, and unshaken. You can live unoffended—even when wounded. The Spirit of Christ empowers **love in the face of betrayal**.

10. Verse 51 – A disciple strikes with the sword

The disciples misread the moment. They thought the kingdom would be secured by force. Jesus rebukes this completely. Spiritual battles are not won through **impulse or violence**, but surrender and trust in God’s way.

11. Verse 53 – “I could ask my Father...”

Jesus wasn’t helpless. He could have **summoned angels**, but He chose the cross. His restraint is an act of supreme power and obedience. Don’t confuse silence with weakness. God’s path is often one of *purposeful restraint* for greater redemption.

12. Verse 56 – “All this has taken place that the Scriptures... might be fulfilled”

Even betrayal and abandonment served God’s purpose. Jesus is aware that **Scripture governs the moment**, not circumstance or people. Your life is not random. Even your hardest moments can be woven into God’s redemptive story.

13. Verse 56b – “Then all the disciples left Him and fled”

They all fled—not just Judas. Jesus entered the darkest moment **alone**—not because no one cared, but because **no one else could carry it**. Some callings require solitude. Don’t be afraid when others can’t walk with you through your deepest obedience.



Week Thirty-Seven: John 19

John 19 recounts the crucifixion of Jesus in vivid detail, and while many of its elements are familiar, several powerful theological and symbolic insights can be overlooked in a casual reading. Below are some of those often-missed dimensions:

1. The Inscription Above the Cross (John 19:19–22)

“*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews*” was written in **Aramaic, Latin, and Greek**—languages representing religion, law, and culture respectively. This trilingual inscription symbolizes that Jesus is *King over all nations and spheres of influence*. Aramaic (religion of the Jews), Latin (power of Rome), and Greek (culture and intellect of the Hellenistic world) reflect the reach of His lordship. Even Pilate, unwittingly, becomes an evangelist proclaiming Christ's kingship to the world.

2. Jesus Entrusts His Mother to John (John 19:26–27)

“Woman, behold your son... Behold your mother.” Jesus, in agony, ensures Mary is cared for—not by His biological brothers (who were likely not believers at the time) but by John, the disciple of love. This highlights that the **family of faith transcends bloodlines**. Jesus creates a new kind of spiritual family at the foot of the cross—a community defined by love and obedience rather than ancestry.

3. “I Thirst.” (John 19:28)

“I thirst” is one of the shortest sayings from the cross. This fulfills Psalm 69:21 but also speaks profoundly to Jesus’ full humanity. After enduring spiritual, emotional, and physical torment, He expresses a basic human need. John is showing that the **Son of God does not escape suffering—but embraces it fully**, identifying with human frailty. It’s also possible John is subtly connecting this moment to the prior motif in his Gospel of Jesus offering *living water*—now He thirsts, so others might never have to.

4. The Use of Hyssop (John 19:29)

“...they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a **hyssop branch** and held it to his mouth.” Hyssop was used during the **Passover** in Exodus to apply the lamb’s blood to doorposts for protection. John carefully includes this detail to portray Jesus as **the true Passover Lamb**, whose blood brings ultimate deliverance. This is no coincidence—it’s a theological statement about substitution and redemption.

5. “It is finished.” (John 19:30)

Jesus’ final words are not a cry of defeat but a **declaration of accomplishment**. The Greek word is *tetelestai*, a commercial term meaning “**paid in full**.” The debt of sin has been completely satisfied. This is not the end of hope—it is the *beginning* of redemption. The cross is not an interruption of Jesus’ mission—it is the **culmination** of it.

6. Blood and Water Flowed (John 19:34)

After His death, a soldier pierces Jesus' side: "Immediately blood and water came out." While this has physical explanations, John includes it to **symbolize spiritual truths**. Blood (atonement) and water (cleansing or new birth) are core Gospel themes. John's audience would likely associate this with the **sacraments of Communion and Baptism**, signs of entry and participation in the New Covenant.

7. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (John 19:38–42)

Both are secret disciples who now boldly care for Jesus' body. Two men from positions of religious power and influence risk their reputations and likely their lives by honoring Jesus. Nicodemus brings an **extravagant** amount of spices (about 75 pounds), which was fit for royalty. Their burial of Jesus becomes a **royal anointing**—ironically, Jesus is finally treated as a King in death.

8. Burial in a New, Unused Tomb (John 19:41)

"...in a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid." This fulfills prophecy (Isaiah 53:9 — "with a rich man in his death") and ensures the **resurrection cannot be confused** with another body. The tomb's newness, the sealed stone, and Roman guards all highlight that **the resurrection, when it occurs, will be undeniable**.



Week Thirty-Eight: John 20

John 20 records the **resurrection of Jesus**—a climactic and hope-filled chapter. Yet even in such a familiar passage, there are rich, often overlooked insights that deepen our understanding of the resurrection, discipleship, and belief.

1. "While it was still dark" (John 20:1)

"Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb..." John emphasizes *darkness* here—symbolic in his Gospel for confusion, fear, and spiritual blindness. Mary approaches the tomb in grief and despair, **not yet understanding** what has occurred. But it's *in the dark* that the light of resurrection begins to break forth. The chapter begins in darkness and ends in belief and light—illustrating how Jesus transforms confusion into clarity. Application: Don't wait until everything is "clear" to seek Jesus—often, He meets us in confusion.

2. Mary's Singular Devotion (John 20:1–2, 11–18)

Mary comes alone. She stays after Peter and John leave. She weeps. Mary Magdalene's **persistent love** and grief keep her at the tomb. Unlike the disciples, she doesn't leave. Because she stays, **she is the first to encounter the risen Christ**. She becomes the *apostle to the*

apostles—the first to be sent with the good news. Faithfulness in sorrow positioned her for revelation. **Application:** Faithfulness in sorrow can become the soil of deeper revelation.

3. The Empty Grave Clothes (John 20:6–7)

“...He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth...folded up in a place by itself.” The grave clothes are not strewn about; they’re neatly placed. This was **not a rushed escape or grave robbery**. The folded face cloth suggests **order, intention, and victory**. Jesus rose not in panic but in power—He had authority over death and left the tomb as a King, leaving His bedchamber. **Application:** Jesus is not the God of chaos but of completion. Trust that He works all things intentionally—even when you can’t yet see the order.

4. “They did not yet understand the Scripture...” (John 20:9)

Despite the empty tomb, “they still did not understand that Jesus had to rise.” Even after three years with Jesus and seeing the evidence, **belief is not automatic**—it requires the opening of both the eyes and the heart. This verse highlights the **need for divine revelation**, not just visible proof. **Application:** Listen for the Shepherd’s voice in prayer and the Word. He speaks to those who seek Him.

5. Jesus Calls Her by Name (John 20:16)

“Jesus said to her, ‘Mary.’ She turned and said...‘Rabboni!’” Mary doesn’t recognize Jesus until He speaks her name. This mirrors **John 10:3–4**, where Jesus says the Good Shepherd **calls His sheep by name**, and *they recognize His voice*. Resurrection power is personal—Jesus doesn’t just rise for the world; He rises *for Mary*, and *for you*. Relationship precedes recognition. **Application:** Embrace the growth that comes through the *ascended* Christ—walk by faith, not by sight.

6. “Do not cling to Me...” (John 20:17)

“...for I have not yet ascended to the Father.” Jesus isn’t rejecting Mary’s affection, but **redirecting her understanding**. The relationship is shifting—no longer earthly but spiritual. She can’t hold on to the Jesus she knew before. The resurrection invites **a deeper, Spirit-filled intimacy** through His ascension and the sending of the Spirit.

7. Jesus Appears to the Fearful (John 20:19–23)

The disciples are behind locked doors “for fear of the Jews.” Jesus enters not through open doors but through **locked hearts**. He doesn’t wait for the disciples to be brave—He enters into their fear and breathes **peace**. This emphasizes the initiative of Jesus—He comes to us even in our weakest, most fearful moments and **breathes new life** (“*He breathed on them...*”—a clear echo of Genesis 2:7).

8. “As the Father has sent Me, so I send you.” (John 20:21)

The resurrection leads immediately to **mission**. Jesus doesn't just reassure them with peace; He **recommissions** them. Resurrection isn't an end—it's the launch of the Church. The disciples who were just afraid are now entrusted with continuing Jesus' work. Resurrection life demands **missional living**.

9. Thomas: From Doubt to Worship (John 20:24–29)

“Unless I see... I will not believe.” Then: “My Lord and my God!”

Jesus meets Thomas where he is—**not with rebuke, but with revelation**. He invites Thomas to touch, to see. But Thomas' confession goes beyond empirical proof: he declares Jesus to be both *Lord* (Master) and *God* (Divine). This is the **highest Christological confession** in the Gospels. Ironically, the "doubter" makes the clearest declaration of Jesus' divine identity.

10. “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (John 20:29)

Jesus speaks directly to *future generations of believers*. This includes **you and me**. Faith that comes without physical sight is not inferior—it's **blessed**. The resurrection narrative invites us not only to believe in what was seen then, but to trust Jesus now, even when the evidence isn't tangible.

11. The Purpose of John's Gospel (John 20:30–31)

“These are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ... and that by believing you may have life in His name.”

John's goal is not just information, but **transformation**. Belief leads to life. His Gospel is not an exhaustive record—it is **a carefully chosen testimony** aimed at awakening faith. This is not history for history's sake. It is **an invitation to eternal life**.



Week Thirty-Nine: Luke 24:13-35

1. Jesus Joins Them in Their Journey, Unrecognized

“Jesus himself came near and went with them. But their eyes were kept from recognizing him.” (vv. 15–16) Jesus **walks with them** even when they don't recognize Him. This speaks to how Christ **draws near in our confusion**, not

waiting for clarity or faith first. His presence often precedes our awareness of it.

2. Honest Disappointment Is Not Rejected

“We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel.” (v. 21) They don't hide their disillusionment. They openly tell Jesus (unknowingly) how their expectations were shattered. Jesus listens before He teaches. God allows **honest lament**—and often meets us in our broken hopes, not our polished answers.

3. Jesus Interprets Scripture, Not Experience

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” (v. 27) Jesus doesn’t validate their experience first—He reshapes their understanding through **Scripture**. This reminds us: the path to truth runs through **God’s Word**, not merely emotional or circumstantial interpretations. Faith is formed by the *Scriptures rightly understood* in light of Jesus.

4. Jesus is Recognized in the Breaking of Bread

“Their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he vanished from their sight.” (v. 31) They don’t recognize Jesus through His voice or appearance, but **in the breaking of bread**—an echo of the Last Supper. Luke is pointing toward **communion** as a moment of revelation. Even now, Jesus continues to reveal Himself in *fellowship and sacrament*.

5. Their Hearts Burned Before Their Eyes Were Opened

“Were not our hearts burning within us... while he opened the Scriptures to us?” (v. 32) Understanding doesn’t come all at once. First their **hearts are stirred**, then their **eyes are opened**. This order reminds us: God often awakens desire and longing *before* full understanding comes. Emotional response to the Word can be a **precursor to deeper revelation**.

6. They Returned Immediately, Even at Night

“They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem...” (v. 33). They had just urged Jesus to stay because it was evening (v. 29), but once they encountered Him, they immediately went **back** to share the good news. The resurrection brings **urgency** and **mission**, even if it’s inconvenient or risky.

7. Jesus Chooses the Unknown, Not the Prominent

These two disciples are **not part of the Twelve**, and Cleopas is not a well-known figure. The resurrected Christ doesn’t first appear to kings or even church leaders—He appears to **ordinary followers**. This signals that **resurrection revelation is not reserved for spiritual elites**. Jesus meets the average disciple on an ordinary road.

8. Transformation Begins with Reflection

They say, *“Were not our hearts burning within us...?”* only after He is gone. It’s in **looking back** that they recognize the significance of their journey. This teaches us that reflection is vital—**God’s presence is often clearest in hindsight**, and discernment grows when we pause and ponder.



Week Forty: John 21

1. The charcoal fire detail points to Peter's restoration.

In verse 9, Jesus is cooking over a charcoal fire — the same rare Greek word (*anthrakia*) used in John 18:18 to describe the fire where Peter denied Jesus three times. This isn't accidental. The smell, the warmth, and the setting would have brought Peter's failure vividly to mind, setting the stage for Jesus to reverse the denials with three affirmations of love. It's a sensory cue for grace and restoration.

2. Jesus meets them in the failure, not after they fix it.

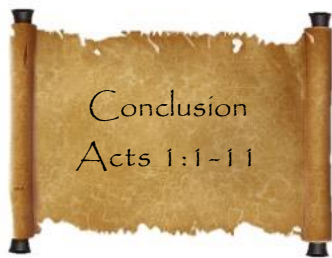
When the disciples go fishing all night and catch nothing (v. 3), Jesus doesn't wait for them to succeed before appearing. Instead, He shows up in their fruitless moment and gives direction that leads to abundance. The miracle is not just about fish — it's about how Jesus meets His followers in lack and redirects them to His provision.

3. The net doesn't break this time.

In Luke 5:6, at the first miraculous catch, the net began to tear. Here in John 21:11, after hauling in 153 large fish, "the net was not torn." This may subtly point to the unbreakable unity of the post-resurrection mission. Now that the risen Christ is their center, the "net" of the gospel will hold all who are gathered in, no matter how many.

4. The question "Do you love me more than these?" is deliberately ambiguous.

In verse 15, Jesus asks Peter, "Do you love me more than these?" "These" could mean the other disciples ("Do you love Me more than they do?"), the fish ("Do you love Me more than your old livelihood?"), or the tools of fishing life ("Do you love Me more than your former way of life?"). The layered meaning fits Peter's story — it challenges both his pride in out-loving others (cf. Matt. 26:33) and his temptation to return to a safe, comfortable trade.



Conclusion: Matthew 28:16-20 & Acts 1:1-11

As we complete our Encounter with Jesus study, I want to share one insight from each of the following passages!

Matthew 28: **Go - or as you go...** Most look at this passage from the context of traveling to a place and then ministering the dynamics of the kingdom of God. Still, this command is not to go and minister when you get there, but instead, as you are going, bring the kingdom authority that is in you into every circumstance of life. Wherever you are, whatever you encounter, whomever you meet, bring the kingdom! Live it out loud, come out of the closet!

The encounters with Jesus you have experienced have prepared you to meet all the demands on your life. Paul told Timothy, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me trustworthy, appointing me to his service." Every one of you has been appointed to His service. You have work to do...do it as you are going, not just when you get there.

Acts 1:11, a spiritual kingdom, On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. 5 For John baptized with[a] water, but in a few days you will be baptized with[b] the Holy Spirit."6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

They wanted a physical kingdom where they could dominate men with their strength and authority, but Jesus' kingdom was much different than that.