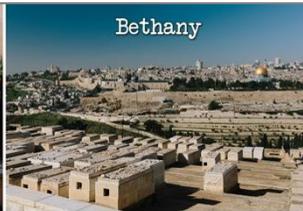


# Daily Devotional

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## Booklet

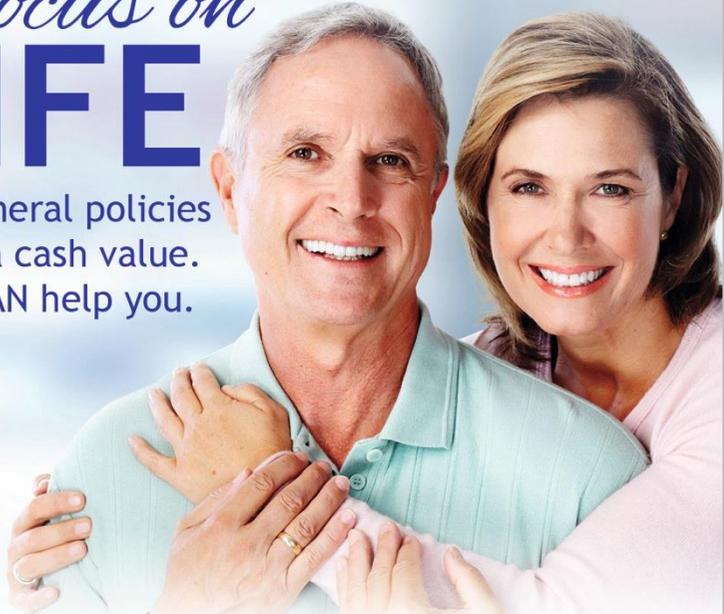


## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS



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## The Journey of Jesus

**THE JOURNEY OF JESUS**

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06 April 2020

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## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY ONE

### ENTERING JERUSALEM

***Read Matthew 21:1-11.***

Through an event foreseen by the prophets, Jesus visually expresses his teachings on humility. Jesus - the King of God's Kingdom; the King of all kings, enters into Jerusalem in a manner quite unlike the entry of the former kings of Israel; quite unlike the entry of Roman rulers into cities on their majestic stallions. Jesus enters the city on a donkey's colt.

This is the picture every follower of Christ is offered regarding the nature of the life we are called to. The only great life in God's kingdom is the one that is humbly lived. Humbleness defines the only way every follower of Christ is to live. We follow the One who defined greatness through humility; the One who humbly entered Jerusalem to serve all others in laying down his life. Jesus makes himself a servant, so we learn to serve. The spiritual power that every follower of Christ is to exert on the world is a function of how that follower has given up on their infatuation with a power, status and honour derived outside of humble living.

This is the teaching Jesus gave himself to. This is also the teaching that the disciples knew so well but battled most to live. Like all of Jesus' teaching about life in God's kingdom, this teaching is to touch our quality of character, rather than just our pool of knowledge. In God's kingdom, character is formed by collaborative effort between God and us. God works within and we practice this instruction. This process is anything but instant. Just to learn change from the inside out is a life mission. The process further includes much failing to honour and serve others without seeking recognition or personal gain. It requires many necessary knock-

downs in our lives that offer sobering realism about our limitations and to address our conceit.

But as we continue to be inspired by God's Spirit into such humble living, we discover our life has influence; it is beginning to exert spiritual power on the world as we are being led into positions of leadership and responsibility that require people who serve with moral authority.

***Prayer: Lord, help me in living greatness through humility. Amen.***

## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY TWO

### BETHANY

*Read Matthew 26:6-13.*

The first 30 verses of this chapter capture the events that take place over two suppers. Two characters emerge into prominence at each supper; a devoted outsider at the first supper and a wayward insider at the last supper. Over the next two days, we look at each supper.

The devoted outsider at the first supper emerges into prominence through one simple act. The first significance of pouring perfume over Jesus' head is that in doing so this devoted outsider honours Jesus – not just as King or Messiah, but as a suffering King/Messiah. While the 12 disciples all followed Jesus as Messiah, they battled to grasp that He is a suffering Messiah – not just a Messiah that suffers, but even more so a Messiah because He suffers. This kind of Messiah was something the 12 disciples resisted. For that reason, Jesus, on many an occasion had to spell it out to them that He and those who followed Him would enter into a unique suffering and death. Even on this evening, he takes the opportunity to point out that what has been done to Him by this woman is something left undone by each of them – she has prepared him for burial (v12). In the act of pouring perfume over Jesus' head, the unnamed, devoted outsider responds to Jesus in a way that the 12 disciples are yet to respond.

The second significance in this woman's act is that she honours Jesus as king as generously as possible. The woman took the thing of most value to her and poured it out over Jesus. Love never calculates. Love never thinks how little it can decently give. Rather, love desires to give of itself to the uttermost limits, and when it has given all it can give, it still thinks the gift too little. There are

moments in life when love's extravagance trumps common sense; when a moment is seized for love and for love alone, leaving the philosophers and ethicists (and in this case, the disciples) in dismay. This unnamed outsider demonstrates a love beyond calculation, and in so doing sends out the following message to the world: "We have not begun our following of Christ if we think of giving to Him in terms of as little as we respectably can".

The unnamed outsider anoints Jesus in an act of worship and a display of unreserved devotion. Jesus affirms her gesture as fitting and her timing appropriate.

***Prayer: Jesus, may my response to you also receive your affirmation as both fitting and timely. Amen.***

## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY THREE

### UPPER ROOM – LAST SUPPER

*Read Matthew 26:17-30.*

The importance of being diligent to the “real time” unfolding of events is crucial to understanding this passage. Many theologians have spoken of Judas being willing to sacrifice Jesus for money. Many a sermon identifies Judas as the one who secured Jesus for crucifixion. In so doing two acts separated by time are judged to be common and are thus linked together. But without knowing the end of the story, there are more probable outcomes to Judas’ approach to the chief priests. The amount of irregular and unpredictable events between Judas’ approach to the high priests and Jesus’ crucifixion even makes this result one of the more unlikely outcomes! As such it would have been a long shot for Judas to have approached the high priests with this end in mind. And so it is worth considering that in his approach to the high priests, Judas never intended Jesus to die. In Jesus, Judas still saw a Messiah - but one that needed assistance. In Jesus there was still a divine leader who just needed to be nudged a little to accelerate the action of God. In Jesus was a revolutionary who was waiting for a bold response from his subjects to indicate their readiness to engage with the enemy and expel the oppressive Romans in order for God’s people to be free.

The above reflects Judas’ betrayal simply as an intention to compel Jesus to act. When this plan went so wrong, Judas was psychologically overcome and took his life. While this consideration makes less of a villain of Judas, it doesn’t free him of an arrogant and opinionated self-centredness that refused to accept Jesus as He was. It doesn’t absolve Judas from the human condition of choosing to define another (in his case - Jesus) in terms more acceptable to oneself. It does not free Judas from the

required task in the life of every follower of Jesus to deny self and dislodge individualism from its place of primacy.

Judas' betrayal, and maybe ours too, is a failure to accept that it is not Jesus who can or who needs to be changed, but us who can and need to be changed by Jesus. It is not Jesus who needs to be nudged into action, but us who need to God's nudging to do the significant work of confronting the social order of this world. Jesus cannot be used for selfish purposes; we are required to submit ourselves to His purposes. The true tragedy of Judas is that he thought he knew better than God.

***Prayer: Lord awaken me to the peril of living life thinking I know better than you. Amen.***

## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY FOUR

### GETHSEMANE

*Read Matthew 26:36-56.*

The ineffectiveness of discipleship caused by the lack of understanding of Jesus' person and ministry is painfully displayed in their final hours with Jesus before His arrest. The disciples fail to see the urgency of Jesus' concern.

The inner group is told of Jesus' distress (26:38) and are instructed to remain awake while he goes to pray. Upon Jesus' return he finds them sleeping and speaks to Peter, "Simon are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?" (26:40). Prior to this, the disciples had been warned that they would face situations of persecution and that they should watch and not fall asleep (24:4-14, 36-44). As tragedy looms the disciples are unaware; they fall asleep and are unconscious to a world of tragedy. In the few final moments of Jesus' suffering and death, Jesus is alone - Peter and the disciples had deserted him.

While their ineffective discipleship fails in the hour of Jesus' distress, this failure is only to disappoint them at Jesus' arrest. It is upon His arrest that Peter produces a sword and attacks those who have come to perform the arrest. This act is consistent with Judas' thinking, and the rest of the disciples, that Jesus needed to just be nudged into action and, once nudged, in a supreme moment, God would surely intervene and their foes would be conquered. The disciples were unable to accept the path Jesus chose for himself and his disciples, and continue to follow their own ideas of Jesus rather than Jesus himself.

This violent act of Peter opposes Jesus' voluntary surrender and deliberate acceptance of the cross, and requires intervention. The

Pharisees, using this resistance, would be able to bring the charge of Jesus beginning a revolt against the Roman occupation. Jesus' intervention perplexed the disciples, and perhaps in this moment a veil of misunderstanding and disappointment came over the disciples. This caused them to flee, deserting Jesus.

***Prayer: Jesus, save me from any ineffective discipleship that causes me to miss the urgency of the moment. Amen.***

## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY FIVE

### COURT

*Read Matthew 26:57-68.*

Jesus in His time of trial – of being arrested and dragged into Jerusalem to be placed on trial before a kangaroo court overnight, of hearing false witness and twisted truths, of being subjected to self-indulgent theatrics of those opposed to Him and then being physically tortured and sentenced to death, demonstrates patience. Patience is living in the knowledge that God's work will be done, in spite of obstacles and setbacks.

Verse 63 speaks of Jesus' chosen response of silence to the false evidence implicating Him. Is this silence not an indicator of Jesus' knowledge that even in the midst of trial and tribulation, God's work will be done? Jesus can stand steadfast in His time of trial because of His conviction that God's work continues even in the trials of life. His silence in the trial is in stark contrast to the open conversation He has with His Father. We know of the constant conversation Jesus entered into with the Father. Do you remember what Jesus was doing just prior to his arrest? Praying in the garden of Gethsemane – having a conversation with the Father. It was this conversation with the Father that allowed Jesus to enter into His greatest trial with the knowledge that God's work will not be stopped, but will continue even in the midst of the trial. Jesus had turned to the Father as His only source of strength, and this source alone would see him through His trial, accomplishing the work of God in the process.

And so you and I will live, like Jesus, lives under trial when we prepare ourselves now for the trials that lie ahead of us. We prepare for our future trials by entering into relationship with the Father today. We need to be in prayer now so that we can be

found in prayer then. We need to be praying now so that we will be found praying in our trials. We need to build a strength of character now so that we can have that strength in our trials. Between us and God there should never be silence.

James writes of a patience leading to endurance that carries one all the way to perfection and completeness. Jesus lives this. Jesus shows us that when faith succeeds in facing a trial, it increases our ability to endure. And such endurance will carry us all the way to perfection and completeness – to the completeness of knowing of the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace patience kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control.

***Prayer: Jesus, lead me into open communication with the Father now, in order to prepare for the coming trials. Amen.***

## THE JOURNEY OF JESUS: DAY SIX

### GOLGOTHA

***Read Matthew 27:45-56.***

The quenching of our thirst is to be fundamental to our survival. We thirst for many things, we thirst for nourishment, we thirst for well-being. We have a thirst to be loved and to find we belong in relationship. We have a thirst for justice and for peace. We thirst for significance and transcendence. And we thirst to know the One who encompasses all these other things – we thirst for God. We thirst for the One who makes us who we are, who grants us life, biological and eternal.

Jesus cries from the cross. In response, someone standing near the cross soaks a sponge in some sour wine, or vinegar, puts it on a branch and holds it up to Jesus' mouth (v48). When Jesus was thirsty – the world offered him sour wine. Similarly, the world cannot offer us a thirst-quenching drink. It can never satisfy us. Even the best in this world is inferior to what is offered by Christ. There is only One who offers a thirst-quenching drink, and we are misled in turning to something or someone in this world to offer us a thirst-quenching drink. No house, no amount of money, no politician, no political system, no situation offers a thirst-quenching drink.

Sometimes, when we need a thirst-quenching drink, we look to the world to provide it. In such moments we need to hear afresh the words of Jesus to the Samaritan woman at the well, "You who drink the water from this earthly well will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give you will become in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life".

This is the wonderful gift offered to you and to me through Christ. Not only this, but there is an added bonus of Jesus' thirst-quenching drink of life giving water and it is this - it frees people: husbands, wives, parents, children, ministers, politicians and political parties; and houses and money and everything else in this world, to be frail and fail and disappoint and cause sorrow and suffering, without being rejected by us.

The things of this world and the people of this world do not quench thirst with life giving water. We need to look beyond this world for our thirst to be quenched. A word from His lips, a smile from His face, an embrace from His arms, is far superior to even the greatest offer in this world. To sit at His feet and drink from the fountain of His love, is better than heaps of silver and gold.

***Prayer: Father I turn to you to quench my thirst. Amen.***

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