



30 Days

OF

PRAYER & FASTING



INTRO

For the next thirty day we are asking to you to journey with us. As journeys go, it will be rewarding, but difficult at times. You will journey through the book of Matthew. You will journey through community-wide prayer. And you will journey through the discipline of fasting.

First, let us discuss why we are asking you to fast.

Fasting is Biblical:

If our actions are not produced from and supported by scripture then those actions will be short lived. God's word gives us endurance and encouragement in the midst of fasting. The Bible is full of great men and women of God who fasted; Moses, Isaiah, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Esther, Anna, Paul, and Jesus all fasted. Not only did Jesus fast, he even taught about it (Matthew 6). In Matthew 9 He tells the Pharisees that after He returns to the Father, His disciples will fast. He never tells us how often to fast or how long we should hold a fast, but he does assume that the children of the kingdom of God will fast. The early church understood this and lived it out (Acts 13:2).

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What is a Biblical Fast:

A Biblical fast isn't abstaining from Facebook, giving up coffee, or getting rid of electronics (although that can be a healthy discipline and perhaps something you want to do during the next thirty days – it is the time of lent). But we are asking for something different. Fasting isn't about losing weight or going on a hunger strike. Rather, it is abstaining from all food, solid or liquid, but not from water, for a specific period of time. There are instances in the Bible where people practiced an absolute fast, abstaining from both food and water (Esther 4:16), but this was not the most common type of fast. Nor is this the type of fast we are asking you to participate in.

Why Fast:

In the Bible people fasted for a myriad of reasons: to turn back God's wrath, to ask God to perform a miracle, to avoid destruction, or to gain guidance and direction for the future. All of these are Biblical, yet we must not equate fasting with an equation that forces God to do something. We do not fast in order to force God to do something for us. Rather, we fast to know God, to see His face, and for the world to behold the glory of God. God asked the people in Zechariah 7:5, "When you fasted and mourned...was it for me that you fasted?"

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Jesus says that when we fast, God will see and reward us. This reward is not the gifts of God, but God himself. Why would anyone want to settle for a secondary pleasure? Seek God in your fasting, not His gifts. Gifts are to be received joyfully, but they should not be elevated to the place of God.

One such wonderful gift when fasting is that God will show us who we truly are. In other words, God reveals to us the things that control us. Pride, anger, jealousy, etc. will surface while you fast. At first, you will want to attribute it to hunger. But it's important to realize that it came out of you because it was in you. When Isaiah saw God, he cried out, "Woe am I, I am a man of unclean lips."

As you draw closer to God you will begin to hear His voice more clearly. This is why prayer and fasting are intertwined. To hear God's voice and to know His will is to pray it be done on Earth as it is in Heaven. As we fast together we ask that you spend time praying for specific needs. (See daily prayer points)

How to Fast:

If this is your first time to fast then I suggest you try a fasting through breakfast or lunch and then work up to a twenty-four hour fast.

INTRO

Start the fast at lunch on Wednesday and break that fast at lunch on Thursday. Be sure to drink plenty of water during this time, especially since Beijing is so dry. You will feel hunger pains; when this happens it is a reminder to pray, to read His word, to go to God, and to depend upon Him...man shall not live on bread alone.

During lunch and dinner get alone; remove yourself from the temptation of food. Use that time to pray and worship (in the Bible, fasting is often accompanied with prayer and worship, Luke 2:37). Don't call attention to your fast.

Remember, you're fasting to be seen by God, not men. Don't eat a big breakfast on Wednesday morning. Just eat a normal meal. Also, for lunch Thursday try to eat something lighter than usual. Fruits and vegetables are best.

Lastly, this discipline will not be easy. You will get hungry. Your stomach will growl. You will see food and desire it. When this happens, drink some water. Ask God for spiritual food. Jesus endured the cross by looking to the reward after the cross. You can endure hunger by reminding yourself of the reward: nearness to God.

INTRO

In the end remember, you are to be the master of your stomach, not its slave. We believe that God will use this fast to renew us as individuals. But since this is a corporate fast, we also believe that God will create a movement among us that results in His blessings and glory being spread to those around us as well. We pray for you as we go on this journey together. May He be glorified in us, as we are satisfied in Him.



Day One

MARCH 23



READ

Matthew 1:18-23

18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. 19 And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. 20 But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." 22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: 23 "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

MEDITATE

To prepare our hearts for Easter we begin with a birth. After a long list of normal, might I say boring, begats we come to something totally different. The birth of Jesus took place, “in this way.”

Through a virgin. From the Holy Spirit. Inaugurated by an angel. Confirmed in a dream. Matthew wants us to know that Jesus is unlike anyone who had come before Him.

God becoming man. Heaven coming to Earth. The King dwelling among his subject. The purpose was to save his people from their sins. The plan would be executed by...well...an execution.

As a Christmas song so poignantly points out, “Christ was born to die that man might live.” The world is in need of a Savior who will save us from sin. Perhaps you read that too quickly, let’s try again. The WORLD...NEEDS...a...SAVIOR. Our world. Our city. Our workplace. Our neighborhood. Our apartment complex. Our delivery people. Our taxi drivers. Our waiters and waitresses. Our friends. Our family. And yes, we ourselves. The world needs a Savior. That Savior is Jesus.

PRAY

There are thousands of expats in Beijing that do not know Christ as Savior. There are those who come from closed nations or unbelieving backgrounds. What an opportunity for the churches in Beijing to reach the nations.

Pray for the international churches to be creative with how they share the gospel.

Pray for Christians in Beijing to have a heart to share the gospel in their workplaces and communities.

Pray even now that God would move on the hearts of many to join an Easter service this year and fall in love with Jesus.



Day Two

MARCH 24



READ

Matthew 2:1-6

1 Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the east came to Jerusalem, 2 saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews? For we saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him." 3 When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; 4 and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. 5 They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for so it is written by the prophet: 6 "'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel.'"

MEDITATE

Jesus has been and will always be a King. The Magi at Jesus' birth and Pilate at Jesus' death both called Him, "the King of the Jews." But Jesus is not a typical king. This King came not to rule a land but our hearts. This King came not to be served but to serve. It is a strange King indeed who chooses the way of suffering, to be born in a pigsty rather than a palace. He comes not to exclude himself from the sorrows of the people but to experience every sorrow and bear each one of them for His people.

But as with every king or ruler, Jesus too experiences opposition. The world will always be full of Herods. Herod was alarmed at Jesus' coming. Herod was intimidated by Jesus' coming. Herod feared...hated...Jesus' Kingship. He would not submit to the greater King, so he killed in order to keep his crown. For all the wrong of Herod he was certainly right on one account, there can be only one King. Jesus Himself says, "you cannot serve two masters." The coming of Jesus is a call for us to hoist the white flag of self, to surrender our kingdom and crown to a greater King, King Jesus.

PRAY

Pray for the oppressive governments around the world.

Ask the Lord to strategically place Christians in the midst of evil regimes.

Pray for the suffering that is experienced for Jesus' sake.

Pray for strength in the midst of pain and joy in the midst of sorrow.

Perhaps go to Open Doors and pray over the countries listed there.

<https://www.opendoors.org.za/christian-persecution/world-watch-list-2019/>



Day Three

MARCH 25



READ

Matthew 3:11-17

11 "I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him. 14 John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

MEDITATE

The Holy Spirit was there at the beginning, hovering over the waters, bringing order out of chaos. He was there bringing to life the lifeless body of Adam. He was there giving strength to Sampson, courage to Gideon, song to David, and wisdom to Solomon. And yet with the coming of Jesus He has come with greater force than in former days. The dam has burst and the Spirit has overflowed into all the world. The dream of Moses and prophecies of Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Joel have come to fulfillment. Jesus comes to bring power on Earth through the Holy Spirit. The life of Jesus was marked with the Spirit. The life of Jesus' followers is to be marked with the Spirit. The Spirit rested on Jesus and as such the Spirit has rested on His people. John promised us that Jesus would baptize, fully immerse, us with the Holy Spirit. May we go out in full confidence that the Spirit is on us, working through us to accomplish His good pleasure.

PRAY

Pray for mighty works of the Holy Spirit in this city.

Pray for healing and for miracles to be manifest that others would see the power of God.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to do His work in the church and in this city, that He would convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment.



Day Four

MARCH 26



READ

Matthew 4:1-11

1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." 4 But he answered, "It is written, "'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "'He will command his angels concerning you,' and "'On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'" 7 Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." 10 Then Jesus said to him, "Be gone, Satan! For it is written, "'You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'" 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.

MEDITATE

The temptation of Jesus in the wilderness mirrors two events, Israel in the desert and Adam in the garden. Both Adam and Israel are called sons of God. Both Adam and Israel are called to be obedient sons. Both Adam and Israel failed. When tempted with sin they both chose to believe a lie about God. They both decided that self preservation was of more important than God glorification.

Jesus, the true son, is the only one who comes out of temptation fully victorious. He chose the hard way to glory, the cross, that we too might experience victory.

It is no mere coincidence that Jesus defeats the Devil with the Words of God. Three times Satan tempts and three times Jesus trusts the truth of Scripture. Is there any surprise that there is an attack on scripture today? If Satan can minimize it's power and truthfulness then he can increase his hold over people.

MEDITATE

Jesus comes to break the lie that truth is relative, that we must make our own way and depend upon our experiences and emotions. As Francis Schaeffer once wrote, “God is there and He is not silent.” The Word has become flesh and walked among us. Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life. In the wilderness Jesus wielded the Word as a weapon and won against the Devil.

Victory is closer than we think. May we be a people with our eyes fixed on Jesus and our ears attentive to every Word that proceeds from His mouth.

PRAY

Pray for teens around the world to get a passion for the Word of God.

Throughout this city teens from Christian families are finding themselves in the desert of temptation. Classmates, teachers, media, and society itself is screaming, “has God really said.”

Pray that God would give them faith to trust in the truthfulness of Scripture and to stand firm in the midst of temptation.



Day Five

MARCH 27



READ

Matthew 5:13-16

13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

MEDITATE

Christ is a global God. Listen to what Isaiah writes about Jesus: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” Here in Matthew Jesus doesn’t just say we are salt and light. Notice that we are the salt of the...Earth, the light of the...World. As strange as it may sound, it’s not enough to make impact where you are. If God so loved the...World and Jesus was a light for the...Nations, then we must be globally minded.

We live in a large city, one of the largest cities in the world, and yet all of its inhabitants and the praise that they would bring to Jesus is minuscule compared to the majesty He deserves. Many of us have heard the call to GO, and that call has brought us to Beijing.

Many of us have discovered that the call to GO doesn’t lessen once we actually go. Beijing is now your home; what are you doing to reach the nations, not just China with the gospel? Remember, Beijing is a revolving door of people coming and going. As you disciple people from India and send them home you are shining light in India.

MEDITATE

As you mentor people from Malaysia and send them home you are shining light in Malaysia. You live among the nations, let your light so shine before the them that they see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

PRAY

Pray for the those who will one day leave China.

Pray that as they go around the world they would faithfully share Christ with others.

Ask God to send strategic people to Beijing in order to be discipled and receive training that they might return to the least reached places of the world with the gospel.



Day Six

MARCH 28



READ

Matthew 6: 1-4

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

2 “Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

MEDITATE

Jesus comes to make all things new (Rev. 21:5). Our Christ is a complete Savior. As a surgeon seeks to remove all cancer from a patient, not one effect of sin will be left undealt with. Jesus removes it all. Sorrow and suffering, need and neglect, pride and pain is being made new.

The Gospel isn't just a future event, it is meant to be a present reality. We are citizens of the "already, not yet" Kingdom. The gospel is reconciliation between man and God, but a result of the gospel is a transformed earth. There is transformation in our actions, desires, and thoughts. When we are redeemed, when we are transformed, things around us begin to be transformed. This is because Christ is working in us to restore the beauty of His creation.

The needy are among us, here in our city. The poor beg at the red lights you sit at. The homeless sleep in the cold not far from where you live. The abandoned wife, husband or child cry in your apartment building. A child trapped in trafficking is working in a storefront you pass by EVERY day.

MEDITATE

This city is in need of transformation. Listen to the words of Jesus and long to bring transformation to this city, “when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.”

Give of thyself to bear the message glorious;
Give of thy wealth to help the helpless prey;
Pour out thy soul for them in prayer victorious;
And all that thou spendeth Jesus will repay.

PRAY

Pray for the poor in Beijing.

Pray for the refugees around the world.

Pray for those caught in prostitution rings.

Pray for the Christians involved in transforming their city through social justice work.

Bonus: Read Matthew 6:16-18 – As we near the end of week one reflect on your fast this week. Remind yourself why you are committing to a fast.



Day Seven

MARCH 29



READ

Matthew 7:7-11

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

MEDITATE

We serve a good God. He is not a genie in a bottle trying to trick you. He does not delight in your misfortune. The Father has given you his greatest, most precious possession, His son. Abraham was asked to give his only son, but was not required to go through with it. Our Father is the greater and better Abraham. Not only was he willing that His son might die in our place, but even when He had the power to stop it, He didn't. This is our good God, who withholds nothing good from us, even at great cost to Himself.

When we approach prayer we must remember the goodness and power of God. We have the power of heaven in our prayers. We have the promise of God that if we ask we will receive good gifts. And let us not forget how Jesus taught us to pray...*in His name*. It is on behalf of Jesus that our prayers are answered, that good, undeserved, unmerited gifts are able to be bestowed upon us.

What a wonderful way to end our first week of prayer and fasting, by meditating upon the fact that Jesus is the mediator of all the prayers we have prayed this week. We have prayed to a good God this week and He has given us only good gifts this week!

PRAY

Spend time in praise, thanking the Father for the gift of the Son and the comfort of the Holy Spirit.

God inhabits the praise of His people (Ps. 22:3).

As we being to corporately praise Him throughout the city, may His presence be felt by those around us.



Day Eight

MARCH 30



READ

Matthew 8:23-27

23 And when he got into the boat, his disciples followed him. 24 And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves; but he was asleep. 25 And they went and woke him, saying, "Save us, Lord; we are perishing." 26 And he said to them, "Why are you afraid, O you of little faith?" Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. 27 And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?"

MEDITATE

It has always somewhat surprised me that Jesus rebukes the disciples for their lack of faith. A storm arises and they go to Jesus. That seems to be the right course of action. When they wake Jesus they say, “save us.” Again, that seems to be the right words to use.

So why does Jesus rebuke them? Because they have, “little faith.” How is it a lack of faith to come to Him in a time of need? I believe there are two things at play here.

First, they were afraid. Fear is not a sin, but apparently their fear was unfounded. Thomas Jackson once wrote, “My religious beliefs teach me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time of my death. I do not concern myself with that, but to be always ready whenever it may overtake me. That is the way all men should live, and all men would be equally brave.”

To live with eternity in mind is to take away the power of fear that death might hold over us.

Secondly, apparently they didn't really expect Jesus to save them, or at least not in a miraculous way. Listen to verse 27, “the men marveled, saying, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?”

MEDITATE

I'm not sure what they expected Jesus to do, but it wasn't to stop the wind and the waves. I have certainly been there before, and I would venture to say you have as well. There have been times when I have prayed for something and found myself surprised when it was actually answered. James warns against such type of asking, "let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."

Jesus has come to increase our faith. He has come that we might not fear needlessly. He has come that we might believe in the power of God and come to expect to see His power displayed through our prayer.

PRAY

I can't imagine you not knowing someone who needs faith today. With visa laws changing, uncertainty of the economy, the constant uncertainty of change that comes with living in the city, or changing political environments around the world, there are storms we all face.

Pray that Jesus would grant them faith to trust and grace to calm the storm that rages inside them.



Day Nine

MARCH 31



READ

Matthew 1:18-23

9 As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth, and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him.

10 And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples.

11 And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12 But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

MEDITATE

Follow me.

These are not words spoken only to Matthew or Peter or Thomas. Jesus speaks them to us as well. In the midst of our busy lives, in the midst of our sin, in the midst of our selfishness, Jesus, God in the flesh, comes to us, stoops down, looks us in the eyes and says, “you, follow me.” Paul reminds us, “not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth.”

Jesus is not looking for the elite or healthy. He's looking for the lowly and sick. He is not looking for the perfect person. He's looking for sinners in need of a Savior. This was his purpose for coming...to say it more positively, He has come to call sinners. Paul comforts Timothy with these words, “The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.”

Jesus loves sinners. When He lived on earth He spent time with sinners. He ate with sinners. He laughed with sinners. And as He went from sinner's house to sinner's house he carried His disciples with Him, that they too might learn to love sinners.

MEDITATE

Remember, you too were ensnared in sin, you too needed rescuing, you too needed compassion, and you too need a Savior. To follow Jesus is to find yourself dining with those for whom Jesus came to die.

Listen afresh to the words of Jesus...

Follow Me

PRAY

Pray for conviction of sin in this city

Pray for open arms from churches and small groups throughout the city.

Pray for the church to move out of Christian circles and find itself dining with sinners.

As we go pray for, what Jackie Pullinger calls, soft hearts and hard feet.



Day Ten

APRIL 1



READ

Matthew 10:1-4

And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. 2 The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; 3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

MEDITATE

Satan lives to torment God's image bearers, but Jesus came to do away with the works of the devil. Jesus has not only given us freedom, but has given us power and authority to proclaim freedom to others.

In Matthew 10 we see Jesus calling His disciples, giving them authority over Satan and his work, and then sending them out to do that work. Nothing has changed. We are called to do the work of a disciple. We, through the power of Jesus, are called to do away with the works of Satan.

Satan torments many today with fear, doubt, self-loathing, false security, possession, oppression, etc. Paul reminds us that we do not “wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

May we never forget we are soldiers involved in a cosmic war. As you go to work this week, as you spend time with family this week, as you eat a meal with a friend this week, live in the authority Christ has given you.

PRAY

Pray that our spiritual eyes would be opened so we can see clearly the works of the devil.

Pray for friends who struggle with addiction.

Pray for people in your life that are suffering from depression.

Ask the Lord to use you to bring deliverance from the works of Satan.



Day Eleven

APRIL 2



READ

Matthew 11:25-30

25 At that time Jesus declared, “I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to little children; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. 28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

MEDITATE

Jesus comes to earth to remove our burdens, not add to them. The Pharisees were good at making people feel terrible. They piled on the backs of people rule upon rule until the joy of serving God had been sapped from them.

The heart of Phariseeism lives today. It lives in the guilt-focused call to serve or obey. The cure, of course, is grace. There are those who are loaded down with duty to perform in order to receive God's good pleasure. There are those who are loaded down with guilt because they can never do enough, or do it well enough. But the words of Jesus here are soothing to the tired soul, "I will give you rest...my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus offers grace. Jesus comes that we might rest in Him and His work, not in our own efforts. Charles Spurgeon reminds us that, "Holiness is not the way to Christ; Christ is the way to holiness." Through Jesus we have hope. Let us stop striving in our own effort and freely receive the gift of God. If your faith is full of frustration, full of guilt, full of exhaustion, full of sternness, then you need to take a strong look at who you are following. Jesus says, "I am gentle and lowly in heart." Feel His gentleness toward you today. Bask in the beauty of His grace.

PRAY

Pray for people in your church that are trying to please God with their effort.

There are those who come from a legalistic background, ask the Lord to free them from a wrong mind-set and enable them to enjoy the free gift of God.



Day Twelve

APRIL 3



READ

Matthew 12:15-21

15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all

16 and ordered them not to make him known.

17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen,
my beloved with whom my soul is well
pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him,

and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

19 He will not quarrel or cry aloud,

nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

20 a bruised reed he will not break,

and a smoldering wick he will not quench,
until he brings justice to victory;

21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

MEDITATE

Jesus is the chosen servant in whom God is delighted. At Jesus' baptism and at His transfiguration the Father said, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." The Father delights in the Son because the Son willing came to earth and in coming to earth Jesus promises to bring justice with Him.

Isaiah 42 plainly tells us that, "Jesus will not grow faith till he has established justice in the earth." Though He meet opposition, though the very ones he comes to save reject Him, though closest friends leave Him in His time of greatest need, he will not quit nor give up on them. He will not break the broken soul (reed). He will not throw water on a fading flame of faith (smoldering wick). He fulfills His purpose and invites us to share in His victory.

Injustice is all around us. It laughs at us. It taunts us. It whispers softly, "you will never win." And as we lay in our broken state, Christ comes and breathes life on the embers of our faith. In His name and His alone is there hope. Perhaps you feel like the widow in Jesus' parable who cries out day and night for justice, only to be turned away again and again. Take hope. Jesus has come. Jesus will come again, and He brings justice with Him. Jesus' blood has promised to turn your injustice to victory.

PRAY

Think about the injustices in your life and the life of your friends. Think about the injustices you see in this city.

Pray for hope.

Pray for victory.

Pray against corruption.

Pray against unfair treatment in schools and workplaces throughout the city.

Pray against the discrimination and racism people experience in Beijing.

Ask the Lord to overcome hard hearts and to bring peace to those who experience injustice.



Day Thirteen

APRIL 4



READ

Matthew 13:31-33

31 He put another parable before them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. 32 It is the smallest of all seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

33 He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of flour, till it was all leavened.”

MEDITATE

Jesus comes as King of heaven and earth. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lord. He is the one that one day every knee will bow. Every ruler that ever lived, from Alexander the Great to Chairman Mao, those who ruled vast kingdoms and had servants cater to their every whim will one day acknowledge that Jesus is far greater than they ever were.

This King is not without a Kingdom, and it is perhaps the strangest of all Kingdoms. It is a Kingdom where the weak are actually strong. Where the humble are exalted. Where the last become first. It is a Kingdom where it is not seen as a weakness, but a blessing, to mourn and weep. It is a Kingdom where joy is experienced in the midst of suffering, and peace is found in the midst of a storm.

That Kingdom He has planted in each of His followers. As the seeds of the Kingdom grow in us the Kingdom itself grows. As we who have the seed of the Kingdom in us fill the earth, the Kingdom itself fills the earth.

This was His plan from the beginning, be fruitful, multiply, fill the Earth. Jesus brings the Kingdom with Him, plants it inside each of His followers and says, be fruitful, multiply, fill the Earth with the true Kingdom.

MEDITATE

The Kingdom of love and joy, peace and patience, kindness and goodness, gentleness and faithfulness and self control.

Water that seed with the Word of God. Open the shades of your soul and allow the light of Christ to so shine of that seed that it grows into a tree that provides shelter for the nations.

PRAY

Pray for His Kingdom to come on the Earth in greater force.

Pray for the King's will to be done on Earth among His servants as it is in Heaven among His angels.

Pray for the Kingdom culture to grow among the people of Beijing and spread to the nations.



Day Fourteen

APRIL 5



READ

Matthew 14:8-16

8 Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” 9 And the king was sorry, but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given. 10 He sent and had John beheaded in the prison, 11 and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. 12 And his disciples came and took the body and buried it, and they went and told Jesus.

13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them and healed their sick. 15 Now when it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, “This is a desolate place, and the day is now over; send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.” 16 But Jesus said, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

MEDITATE

As a human Jesus knew what it was like to feel deep sorrow and loss. After John died Jesus wanted to get away, to be alone. Here is the Son of God who has power over death, who has raised the dead to life, who will soon raise Himself from death, and will one day raise us up from death to life, but here He surrenders to the plan of the Father. Yet to surrender to God's sovereignty doesn't mean an absence of sorrow.

Jesus' sorrow drives Him to lonely places, away from the crowds. He has come to heal the brokenhearted yet in this moment He is the brokenhearted.

Have you ever been there? You answered the call to go to the nations. You committed to make a difference in the world, but when tragedy strikes you can barely hold it together for yourself; you're certainly in no state to help another.

And yet Jesus does find the strength to serve in His sorrow. In his pain he finds compassion for the sheep who are without a shepherd. Though He is hungry for solitude He finds it in himself to feed the crowd. He leaves us an example here. In our darkest days the Lord can still use us. In our hours of weakness His strength will sustain us to do His work.

PRAY

Pray for those in Beijing who have answered the call to go but who are now struggling to stay.

Pray that in their weakness He be strong.

Pray that in their loneliness Christ would be closer than a brother.

Pray that in their loss the Lord would be their gain.

Pray that they would be able to stay well, that the nations would hear and that God would get glory.



Day Fifteen

APRIL 6



READ

Matthew 1:18-23

Then Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, 2 “Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat.” 3 He answered them, “And why do you break the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die.’ 5 But you say, ‘If anyone tells his father or his mother, “What you would have gained from me is given to God,” 6 he need not honor his father.’ So for the sake of your tradition you have made void the word of God. 7 You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said:

8 ““This people honors me with their lips,
but their heart is far from me;

9 in vain do they worship me,
teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.””

10 And he called the people to him and said to them, “Hear and understand: 11 it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth; this defiles a person.” 12 Then the disciples came and said to him, “Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?”

READ

13 He answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. 14 Let them alone; they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.”

15 But Peter said to him, “Explain the parable to us.” 16 And he said, “Are you also still without understanding? 17 Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth passes into the stomach and is expelled? 18 But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. 19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. 20 These are what defile a person. But to eat with unwashed hands does not defile anyone.

MEDITATE

The Pharisees were seemingly good at obeying the commands of God. They worked hard to keep the 613 laws of the Old Testament. But Jesus comes to reveal something important, devotion to an action isn't the same as desire for God.

If Jesus were after devotion only, the Pharisees would have exceeded his expectations. But this is not the way of Jesus. Jesus comes to reveal that right action without right affections is deadly. It is a whitewashed tomb, a rotten Easter egg, a cup which is clean on the outside but filthy on the inside.

The issue is much deeper than doing good, it really is a matter of worship. And one of the reasons Jesus has come is to restore right worship. Notice what Jesus says in verse 8, "This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me..." The problem with the Pharisees is humanity's problem: worship is natural, God worship is not.

CS Lewis says it well, "The world rings with praise—lovers praising their mistresses, readers their favorite poet, walkers praising the countryside, players praising their favorite game—praise of weather, wines, dishes, actors, motors, horses, colleges, countries, historical personages, children,

MEDITATE

children, flowers, mountains, rare stamps, rare beetles, even sometimes politicians or scholars."

We are all worshipers. It's natural to worship. Unfortunately..it's natural to worship things that shouldn't be worshiped. The first two commandments would seem strange if false worship wasn't natural.

Jesus doesn't chide the pharisees for not being worshipers; He chides them for being false worshipers (praise of men). Jesus doesn't just want your obedience, he wants your heart. Jesus wants your love (the commandments are about love) and the best way to get your love is to capture your heart.

Surrender to Jesus is the answer to all false worship.

He comes to smash your idols.

He comes to open your eyes to the wonders of God.

He comes to turn your heart of stone into a heart of flesh.

PRAY

Pray Revelation 2:4-5 over the churches of Beijing.

Ask the Lord to recapture the hearts of His people who have forgotten His wonder.



Day Sixteen

APRIL 7



READ

Matthew 16:21-26

21 From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised. 22 And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, “Far be it from you, Lord! This shall never happen to you.” 23 But he turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.”

24 Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. 26 For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?”

MEDITATE

Jesus came to die.

This was Jesus' ambition in life: to give His life as a ransom for many. No one, not even His closest disciple would get in that way. Peter loved Jesus, he believed in Jesus, in fact just a few verses before he declares, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

But Peter didn't want a Christ that was going to die. So he tried to fashion Him into something a little more palatable, something easier to follow. Peter thinks, "Jesus, you are not a suffering servant but great King come to rule and reign. Overthrow the government; set up your Kingdom here and now. I will follow this Jesus anywhere."

The only problem is that this wasn't Jesus at all. It was instead, what Peter wanted Jesus to be. Oh how easily we seek to take Jesus and turn Him into an idol. The cure for Peter's ailment was to set his mind on the things of God and not the things of man.

This too is our cure. To accept Jesus as He is not as we would have Him be. Jesus is counter-cultural. He will not be molded to our time or image, instead we are to be conformed into His image.

MEDITATE

After Jesus says, “get behind me Satan,” He looks at Peter and says, “take up your cross...follow me.”

What Jesus calls for is a death to self: self ideas, self desires, self expectations, self longings.

Determine to set your mind on God.

PRAY

Pray for your mind to be renewed through the constant study of God's Word.

Pray for protection against false ideas in our culture.

Pray this not only over you, but over your friends and family as well.

We are in a war and it is a battle of the mind. Two Kingdoms with two very different worldviews are colliding.

Pray for victory against the very real enemy!



Day Seventeen

APRIL 8



READ

Matthew 17:1-13

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. 4 And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.” 5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him.” 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, “Rise, and have no fear.” 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. 9 And as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” 10 And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” 11 He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things.

READ

12 But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.” 13 Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

MEDITATE

The disciples had lived with Jesus. They had heard him preach with a power that could not be matched by the pharisees. They had seen him perform miracles that magicians couldn't match. But they were not prepared for what was about to happen. They were about to get a glimpse of Jesus in all His glory.

In Exodus 33 Moses went up a mountain, hid behind the cleft of the rocks and beheld the Glory of God. In 1 Kings 19 Elijah ascended a mountain, was confronted by fire and wind and an earthquake, but it was in the still small voice that he would behold God in all His glory.

For Peter, James, and John, they too went up a mountain, they too beheld the glory, but this time it was in the person of Jesus Christ as His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.

Let us remember why they were there. Each one, Moses, Elijah, Peter, James, and John had been invited by God Himself to climb the mountain. They were invited to behold His beauty, to bask in His brilliance. Jesus called them to Himself.

MEDITATE

“Come.”

Do you hear it? Do you hear His voice reaching out to you even now? His call wasn't just to the twelve. It wasn't to the great prophets of old.

Jesus calls to each of us. He longs to reveal that same glory to each of us. Put down your busy schedule. Clear some space on your calendar. The Lord is calling. Ascend the mountain. Join with the saints. Behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus.

PRAY

Today's prayer is simple yet powerful. From your heart, with every ounce of passion you have pray the prayer Moses uttered so long ago,

“Show me your glory.”

And then sit and wait. Remember the Glory for Moses was loud, for Elijah soft.

Have no expectations, no requirements other than this...to behold the Glory of God in the face of Jesus.



Day Eighteen

APRIL 9



READ

Matthew 18:15-22

15 “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. 18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 19 Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” 22 Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.

MEDITATE

Jesus' life is marked by a ministry of reconciliation. Not only did he reconcile us to God but also to one another. In His company zealots and tax collectors were able to set aside political ideology and find common ground in Jesus. His blood broke the barriers of racial bias as Jews and Gentiles worshiped together freely. His death did away with economic discrimination as rich and poor sat side by side. In Him there is "neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Let us not pass too quickly over the multi-ethnic diverse congregation of the early church. They were not able to stand side by side with raised arms without understanding forgiveness. It is not as if they simply forgot who they were or who their neighbors were. They did not ignore the past hatred that they had experienced by the other. Instead, they realized that in Christ their abuse was absorbed. They realized that in Christ their need for revenge was removed.

Jesus has made it possible for us to be in complete unity. If we are honest, relationships are difficult. They have been since the fall of man. Adam's first relational act after the fall was to blame his wife. Loving your spouse or friend or family member or coworker or roommate is easy

MEDITATE

when we are all in agreement on how life is to go and when we are all acting selflessly and when our actions do not cause pain or discomfort to another, but that very rarely is the case.

We sin and sin affects those closest to us. The effects of sin are the barriers in our relationships, but Christ and His work on the cross demolishes sin. If Christ has demolished sin then He has also demolished the effects of sin, the walls of hostility that we raise between us.

Turn on the news today and you will find that forgiveness is not natural. It is more natural to hold onto resentment than to extend forgiveness. But for us, for the Christian, we not only have an incentive to forgive, we also have a supernatural power to forgive.

PRAY

Pray for unity in your local church.

Pray for unity among the churches in your community.

Pray for true forgiveness and reconciliation in all of your relationships.

If there is someone that you need reconciling with, pray for them and yourself and then go and be reconciled.



Day Nineteen

APRIL 10



READ

Matthew 19:1-6

Now when Jesus had finished these sayings, he went away from Galilee and entered the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. 2 And large crowds followed him, and he healed them there.

3 And Pharisees came up to him and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?” 4 He answered, “Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, 5 and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? 6 So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

MEDITATE

Marriage is meant to reflect God's beauty, God's love, and God's sacrifice. Marriage is God's metaphor for Christ and the church. It is meant to magnify the magnificence of Christ.

Unfortunately, it does not always do that. Many today have grown up in broken homes. Many today are in the midst of a broken marriage. As a result marriage is marred. It is feared and avoided by many.

We who do not study history have a habit of thinking our problems are unique to our generation. They are not. Marriage was a mess in Jesus' day. Jesus came to restore the purpose of God in all things, especially marriage.

When asked about marriage, Jesus didn't get into a debate over hypothetical ethical exceptions. Instead, Jesus went back to the beginning.

In the beginning God created. Everything God created was good. On the last day of creation He considers His creation to be very good. But then the language changes.

It was not good for man to be alone. So God continued his good creation and made woman, and after separating woman from man He brought them back together and made them one flesh.

MEDITATE

The rib removed has become the wife interwoven once again with man.

In creation God spent considerable time separating. He separated light from darkness. He separated day from night. He separated land from sea. He separated sky and space. God separated the rib from Adam.

But once again the language changes. Now God joins together. God is not afraid of separation. He spends all of Genesis one separating.

He, and he alone, is the one who creates and He and He alone is the one who has the authority to separate. This is why Jesus says, “What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate.”

May God’s good plan of marriage be restored, may broken dreams and broken homes be restored, may He make all things new.

PRAY

Pray for the married couples you know.

Pray that their marriages would be strong and that it would display the love that Jesus has for the church.

Pray against the little foxes that threaten to enter the garden of love and spoil the vines.

Pray for those who are divorced.

Pray that God would bring healing and work it out for good.



Day Twenty

APRIL 11



READ

Matthew 20:17-19

17 And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, 18 “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death 19 and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”

MEDITATE

The Son of God has set his face to Jerusalem. As he nears the city he takes His disciples aside and shows them His purposes. He has come as a lamb led to the slaughter. Though they will flog Him, He will not falter. Though they will condemn Him and crucify Him, he will not cower in fear. He will not protest, nor shriek back. It is for this purpose He came into the world. Before the chaos He wants to remind His disciples that He is in control. No one takes His life, he freely lays it down. And as he is able to lay it down He is able to take it up again. He will be raised on the third day.

As we near holy week let us be taken aside with our Savior and remember, He came to die in my stead. Too easily do we pass over the words of Jesus.

The Christ who comes for His people will be condemned to death. The Messiah, God's eternally anointed, will be mocked by mortal man. Jesus, the faultless, faithful friend of sinners, will be flogged by faithless men. Jesus, the one through whom all things are created and life is sustained, will be crucified. Praise be to God that this is not the end of Jesus' message. Jesus, the redeemer who was ransomed in my place, will be raised. His death is my death. His resurrection is my resurrection

PRAY

Confession is a regular practice of the Christian. Ask the Lord to examine your heart and reveal the hidden sin that you are not aware of.

Spend some time in confession and then allow the confession to turn to praise, knowing that Christ came to pay the penalty for that sin and has freed you from the consequences of sin.



Day Twenty- One

APRIL 12



READ

Matthew 21:12-17

12 And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. 13 He said to them, “It is written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer,’ but you make it a den of robbers.”

14 And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. 15 But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” they were indignant, 16 and they said to him, “Do you hear what these are saying?” And Jesus said to them, “Yes; have you never read, ““Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise’?”

17 And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

MEDITATE

It's amazing to think that the God of the universe would take time to love on children. They are not the influential in the city. They can not fund his projects or leave their homes to follow Him. Jesus' own disciples thought of them more as a burden than joy.

Earlier they had tried to turn children and their parents away from Jesus, but Jesus would not have that. He brought them near, laid hands on them, and blessed them. Here we see Jesus pausing to receive the praise of children. It's the last week of His life, there's so much to do, so much to teach, so little time left with His disciples, and yet he finds the time to sit and listen to children cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David!"

The Pharisees and children alike both saw the wonderful things Jesus had done, but it was the children alone who allowed their hearts to turn heavenward as they opened their mouths in worship. Christianity is not just a faith for the adults only, there is room at the feet of Jesus for Children too.

May this generation be a generation of young people who rise us and bless the name of the Lord!

PRAY

Pray for children living in Beijing.

Pray for parents throughout this city, that God would use them to turn the hearts of their children to Christ.

Pray also for those who disciple children, that they would have joy and creativity.



Day Twenty- Two

APRIL 13



READ

Matthew 22:34-40

34 But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. 35 And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. 36 “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” 37 And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

MEDITATE

When most people think of the commandments they think of it as something negative, something good that is forbidden or kept from you. But when Jesus was asked the greatest command he doesn't begin with "Thou shall not," instead He goes to the heart of the gospel, love.

We are made to love God and when we are not loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength we are less than we were created to be and as such can not experience the joy that we were created to feel. Augustine reminds us that our hearts are restless till it finds its rest in God.

Because we are created to love God a natural extension of that love is to those that are created in His image. It is true, God's image in us has been fractured through sin. Our beauty has been marred, our kindness and compassion has been twisted to serve self. Frankly, we don't act like God, but nonetheless we are still in His image. We can not escape this. Every breath we take is a testimony to His glory and brilliance.

John 3:16 reminds us that God loved the world. The world is not just the totality of mankind, but representative of the fallenness of man. He loves the world that rejected Him. He loves the world that turned away from Him. He loves the world that is marred for it is still His creation and it is

MEDITATE

still “in His image.”

The second greatest commandment is really a reflection, an echo, of the first. I love my neighbor because I love God. To love our neighbor because they are kind will fail us when their kindness stops. To love our neighbor because they are funny will fail us when their humor sours. But to love our neighbor because they are made in God’s image and I love God, thus I love them in God, will never fail for God’s love is inexhaustible and His loving kindness will never fail.

Set your love toward your neighbor on something unshakable, set it on the first and greatest commandment, set it on God.

PRAY

Pray for the churches throughout the world, that they would, in word and deed, love the Lord with all their hearts and love their neighbor as themselves.

Allow the Lord to direct your heart to specific nations that need the church to rise up and show love.

Ask the Lord to allow your love to so shine before man that your neighbors will see the glory of God this week.



Day Twenty- Three

APRIL 14



PALM SUNDAY

READ

Matthew 23:13-15

13 “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. For you neither enter yourselves nor allow those who would enter to go in. 15 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.

MEDITATE

When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden they were sent away from the presence of the Lord. The punishment of sin is death. Yet Adam and Eve continued to live after sin; it took time for the physical punishment to take effect. More immediate was the death of communion with God. In a sense, sin shut up heaven from Earth, but Jesus' coming was an opening of the door of heaven that all might enter in. This is why Jesus says, "No man comes to the Father but through me."

Through Jesus heaven stand wide open for all mankind to enter. But there are those on earth who continually seek to shut that door and enter in through some secret way. To make matters worse, they seek to lead their followers through this secret door as well. We call these people false teachers. Over and over in this chapter Jesus calls the Pharisees blind. They need someone to guide them to God, but instead of seeking direction from Jesus they continue in their blindness and foolishly lead their followers away from the one who has the keys of heaven.

There are things in this life that to think wrongly have no real consequence. If I believe Napoleon was German instead of French or if I believe Abraham Lincoln was the third president of the United States instead of the sixteenth, that doesn't

MEDITATE

really affect my day to day life (other than perhaps a poor score on my history test). Yet there are other things that to think wrongly have eternal consequence.

The world is full of false ideas about God, some of those ideas are deadly. Some of those ideas will shut the kingdom of heaven in people's faces.

What we believe about Jesus is of eternal importance. May we be a people who seek to speak the truth of the gospel so as not to shut the door of heaven nor keep out those who would enter it. May we be a people who lovingly defend the gospel against such false teachers.

PRAY

As Christianity grows so do cults claiming to be Christian.

Pray against these groups that give false hope.

Pray for God to raise up men and women to lovingly share the truth with blind cult followers.

Pray for God to use you to help others see the truth of the gospel.



Day Twenty- Four

APRIL 15



READ

Matthew 24:1-2

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. 2 But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.”

MEDITATE

Herod's temple paled in comparison to Solomon's Temple, yet that didn't keep the disciples from marveling at its beauty. I'm not for sure why the disciples were pointing out the buildings of the temple to Jesus; it wasn't the first time they had seen them. Perhaps it was in reverence to the majesty of God. Perhaps it was the lavish gold and skillful craftsmanship that they paused to take in. Whatever the reason, Jesus says something unexpected...it won't last.

Beauty is good. The Temple was good. But both are temporary. It's easy to get so caught up in the temporal that we miss the eternal. As the disciples were excitedly pointing out the beauty of the Temple they were standing next to the real Temple, the eternal temple, the temple that would not stay destroyed.

Man would seek to destroy this Temple, but after three days in the grave this true temple would rise again with greater glory than Herod's and Solomon's temple combined.

Jesus' call to reality is a sober one. Enjoy beauty. Marvel at great works. But always remember that the temporary will give way to the eternal. In Matthew 6 Jesus reminds us to lay up eternal treasures.

MEDITATE

In 2 Corinthians 4 Paul writes of an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison. He goes on to encourage us to look to the unseen, the eternal, rather than the temporal.

Later in Matthew 24 Jesus will tell us to look to the unseen that will one day be seen, His return. If His birth was real, if His death was real, then we have assurance that His return is also a reality.

Allow the promise of His return to keep your eyes and your heart, on the things that really matter. Let us not store up treasures on earth, but in heaven, that our heart may be on the truly important things in life, the eternal.

PRAY

Pray against covertness and against wasting our lives on things that don't matter.

Ask God to give a strategic urgency to His church, that we might long for His return and live in light of the reality of that return.



Day Twenty- Five

APRIL 16



READ

Matthew 25:14-30

14 “For it will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted to them his property. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. 16 He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them, and he made five talents more. 17 So also he who had the two talents made two talents more. 18 But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. 19 Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me five talents; here, I have made five talents more.’ 21 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 22 And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, ‘Master, you delivered to me two talents; here, I have made two talents more.’ 23 His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’ 24 He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not

READ

sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed, 25 so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here, you have what is yours.’ 26 But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sown and gather where I scattered no seed? 27 Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. 28 So take the talent from him and give it to him who has the ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will have an abundance. But from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away. 30 And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’

MEDITATE

We are living between the coming and return of Jesus. Jesus describes it as a master who goes on a journey. This master has every intention to return and he has every intention that when he returns he will find his servants doing the work he has called them to do. The master is not heartless. The master is not like Pharaoh, who demands the Israelite make bricks but supplies not the straw. No, this master entrusts (that's an important word...Jesus has entrusted to you) his property to his servants.

Each of us have been given resources to do the work of God until His return. It is true that some have been given more than others. Some have been given more money to manage than others. Some have been given more intellect to steward than others. Some have been given more raw talent to resource than others. We are not called to complain about what we have not been given, we are called to be faithful with what we have been given.

Everything you own, from your physical possessions to your mental abilities, is God's. As such, everything is meant to be used for His Kingdom. Your car, your home, your wealth, your time, your words, your work, are all opportunities for eternal investments. I don't want to hide His resources out of fear, I want to be found faithful.

MEDITATE

I want to hear the words, “well done...enter into the joy of your master.”

PRAY

Pray for believers throughout this city.

Ask the Lord to move on all our hearts to be about building the Kingdom with the resources He has given us.

May nothing of ours be withheld for the advancement of the Kingdom.



Day Twenty- Six

APRIL 17



SPY WEDNESDAY

READ

Matthew 26:14-25

14 Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

17 Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?”

18 He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” 19 And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

20 When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. 21 And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

22 And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?”

23 He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. 24 The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” 25 Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

MEDITATE

“Then one of the twelve...” These are wounding words. If ever there was a stinging sentence it is found here. Out of the many who longed to be a disciple, Judas was one of the few allowed to follow Jesus everywhere. The betrayer daily broke bread with the bread of life. What John would later write is true of Judas, “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands...”

He was there on the lake as the foaming waves buffeted their boat. He, Judas the betrayer, frantically ran to Jesus begging Jesus to wake from His nap and silence the storm. Judas saw Jesus take two fish and feed thousands. It wasn't a rumor or second hand conjecture. He was there. After the meal he stood beside Jesus holding a basket full of food. He went out as one of the twelve disciples and cast out demons, healed diseases, and declared the Kingdom.

In every sense of the word Judas was one of the twelve. He was so connected with the community that on the night of Jesus' betrayal no one suspected Judas. Everyone turned inward, “Is it I?”

Have you felt betrayal before? Do you carry on your body the scars of a friend? Jesus knows your

MEDITATE

pain. Jesus was betrayed by one of His own. Betrayal is always foolish, but to betray the Son of God is beyond all reason. “What will you give me if I deliver him...?” What do I gain if I hand over to you the Savior of the world, the One who created me, the One who will die in my stead? I wonder if the words of Jesus echoed in Judas’ ear even as he uttered those words, “What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul?”

Later Judas will regret his decision. He will return the money. He will acknowledge his sin. But he will not repent. It is a shame to spend so much time with Jesus and miss the thrust of His message.

Judas was there as Jesus lifted the lame man off his mat. Judas watched him walk away. He saw the miracle. He too heard the words of Jesus, “But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins...Rise, pick up your bed and go home.” May we not be found like Judas.

To be so close to Jesus yet so far away, to hear His words but not believe them, to do the work of a disciple, but never truly be a disciple.

PRAY

Jesus himself teaches that the church will be a mixed lot, that it will consist of believers and non-believers.

Pray that false disciples would be convicted of sin and convinced of their need for Jesus.

Pray that their eyes would be open to their eternal condition and would run to Jesus.



Day Twenty- Seven

APRIL 18



MAUNDY THURSDAY

READ

Matthew 26:26-29

26 Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”

27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

MEDITATE

When John sees Jesus he makes a bold statement, “Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.” John was referring to the Passover lamb. In 1 Corinthians Paul makes the same claim, “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.” The Passover tradition goes all the way back to Exodus, but is echoed throughout both the Old and New Testament. Passover is a time of remembrance. Remember what the Lord has done. He has freed us from Egypt. He has protected us from the penalty of death by a lamb who has taken our place.

Jesus knows this is his last meal with His disciples. As He sits with them He wants them to remember what He will do. As the blood of the lamb protected Israel from death, His blood will protect them from eternal death. As the last plague, which Passover symbolizes, drove them out of Egypt and freed them, the plague that Jesus was about to take upon Himself would drive them out of Satan’s hand and free them from sin.

Jesus takes two very important elements to commemorate the event. First he takes the bread, unleavened bread. “Take, eat; this is my body.” The body of Jesus was not like our body. As the bread was without leaven, Jesus’ body was without sin. As manna fell from heaven to nourish and sustain Israel in the desert, so we are

MEDITATE

nourished and sustained by Christ and Christ alone. Take and eat is an invitation to participate in the life of Jesus.

Secondly, he takes the cup. “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant.” The blood placed over the doorposts is the blood applied to our hearts. It is our only hope. Remain in the house, stay within the security of the blood and the death angel will pass over you. Our only hope in this life and in the next is to remain in Jesus, to trust that He has the power to forgive sin and protect us from evil.

Passover is a time of remembrance. Remember what Jesus has done for you. Remember the nails. Remember the lifeless body taken off the cross. Remember the beating and scourging. Remember the crown of thorns, a sign of the curse which Jesus has freely taken upon Himself. Remember Him. Remember Jesus. But also remember that He makes a promise this night. “I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

Remember the promise of His return. Look up to the heavens and long for the advent of that day.

PRAY

Tomorrow is Good Friday. Throughout the world and in Beijing churches will remember the death of Jesus.

Pray that God would draw people to Himself.

Pray for boldness among believers to invite friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers to a Good Friday Service.

Pray that many would come to faith.



Day Twenty- Eight

APRIL 19



GOOD FRIDAY

READ

Matthew 27:15-56

15 Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. 16 And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, “Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?” 18 For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered him up. 19 Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, “Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for I have suffered much because of him today in a dream.” 20 Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. 21 The governor again said to them, “Which of the two do you want me to release for you?” And they said, “Barabbas.” 22 Pilate said to them, “Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” They all said, “Let him be crucified!” 23 And he said, “Why? What evil has he done?” But they shouted all the more, “Let him be crucified!” 24 So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.” 25 And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”

READ

26 Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered him to be crucified.

27 Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before him. 28 And they stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, 29 and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on his head and put a reed in his right hand. And kneeling before him, they mocked him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" 30 And they spit on him and took the reed and struck him on the head. 31 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe and put his own clothes on him and led him away to crucify him. 32 As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry his cross. 33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), 34 they offered him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when he tasted it, he would not drink it. 35 And when they had crucified him, they divided his garments among them by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and kept watch over him there. 37 And over his head they put the charge against him, which read, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews." 38 Then two robbers were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the

READ

temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” 41 So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 42 “He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” 44 And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way.

45 Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” 47 And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This man is calling Elijah.” 48 And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink. 49 But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him.” 50 And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit.

51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, 53 and coming out of the tombs after his resurrection they went into the

READ

holy city and appeared to many. 54 When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!”

55 There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to him, 56 among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

MEDITATE

The cross is full of paradox.

Barabbas is guilty but freed, Jesus is innocent by condemned to die. Pagan Pilate wants Jesus to live, pious Pharisees want Jesus to die. The King, not just of the Jews but of the world, is donned with a robe, a scepter, a crown, not in majesty but in mockery. The people taunt, “Come down now from the cross, and we will believe.” But if Christ were to come off the cross then there is nothing to believe in.

At a time when life is sprouting from the earth, the one who created life itself is dying. The darkest hour in the life of Jesus is dawning of the sun for all mankind. As Jesus lowered His head and yielded up his spirit the saints who had fallen asleep were raised to life. As all Israel watches the death of Jesus it is a foreign soldier alone who cries out, “Truly this was the Son of God.”

The cross is full of paradox.

What looks like defeat is victory. What seems to be weakness (He saved others; he cannot save himself) is in reality strength (Imagine having the power to come off the cross, hearing the taunts, and having the fortitude to remain there). What is considered Jesus’ shame brings great glory and honor to Himself. What seems foolish is actually

MEDITATE

wisdom. An occasion for mourning turns out to be a moment of celebration. The Son of man was lifted up on a cross to be scoffed, but it turns out that He is lifted up in glory and majesty that He might be the Savior of those very scoffers.

G. K. Chesterton calls this paradox, “Truth standing on her head to get attention.”

Has the cross captured your attention? Are you able to walk away from this reading and treat it like a wonderful little story that one reads to their children before bed? The cross is not meant to be a story. The death of God is not meant to be a five minute musing. It is full of paradox because it wants to rouse you from sleep, to wake you from death, to ignite your spirit with such fire that you would never, not for one moment, be able to live in light of anything but the cross.

Galatians 6:14 reminds us of the centrality the cross should take in our lives, “But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.”

PRAY

Pray that the reality of the cross be made known to you.

Ask for the desire to live in light of the cross.

Pray for purpose and clarity of a life lived through the death of Jesus.

Ask this not just for yourself but for those near you as well.



Day Twenty- Nine

APRIL 20



HOLY SATURDAY

READ

Matthew 27:57-66

57 When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. 58 He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. 59 And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud 60 and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.

62 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’

64 Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” 65 Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” 66 So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

MEDITATE

Good Friday, for the disciples, was a shock. Saturday was when reality set in.

Jesus has died. His body is taken from the cross. He is wrapped in burial clothes. He is laid in a tomb. A rock is rolled over the entrance of that tomb. It wasn't a dream. The followers of Jesus wake up Saturday morning with a feeling of loss in their stomach. They are in disbelief. Shell-shocked.

It is the Pharisees, not the disciples, that remember the words of Jesus, that He promised to rise from the dead. So they go to Pilate, that the "last fraud" will not be worse than the first. The tomb is secured. Guards are stationed. The stone is sealed.

It is finished.

Jesus is dead and there is no hope for the disciples to steal the body. We can finally put to rest this crazy notion that Jesus was the Son of God. We can finally go back to life as normal. The followers who shouted Hosanna just one week earlier will come to the conclusion that they were wrong. Yes, there will be a faithful few to carry on His message and teachings, but He's dead...He poses no threat to our way of life now. He did not save Himself. He did not come off the

MEDITATE

cross. Elijah did not come to His rescue. God did not intervene. And after Sunday when the stone is still in place and the seal has not been tampered with the guards will go home and we can put these past three crazy years behind us.

And so Pilate waits. The guards wait. The chief priests wait. The Pharisees wait. As they wait they they have no idea what is in store for them.

The story they hoped to squelch those two thousand years ago still rings out into all the Earth. The message of the Messiah is still being told. The rebellion of Jesus did not die with Him on the cross...

Sunday is coming soon and this will change **EVERYTHING!**

PRAY

Pray for your Easter services.

Pray that the cross and resurrection is clearly preached.

Pray for power and passion from your pastor.

Pray for the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts of people.

Ask the Lord to do something amazing in your church and the churches throughout Beijing this Easter. Every year churches have to turn away people who are interested in hearing the story.

Pray this year the story is more than a story. Pray for salvation in this city.



Day Thirty

APRIL 21



RESURRECTION SUNDAY

READ

Matthew 28:1-20

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. 2 And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. 4 And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. 5 But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” 8 So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9 And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. 10 Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.” 11 While they were going, behold, some of the guard went into the city and told the chief priests all that had taken place. 12 And when they had assembled with the elders and taken counsel, they gave a sufficient sum of money to the soldiers

READ

13 and said, “Tell people, ‘His disciples came by night and stole him away while we were asleep.’

14 And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”

15 So they took the money and did as they were directed. And this story has been spread among the Jews to this day.

16 Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

17 And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. 18 And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

MEDITATE

Death could not keep Jesus in the grave. A stone could not keep Jesus in the tomb. No amount of guards would hold back the resurrection. Not Satan Himself could prevent Jesus' bursting forth from the grave.

Jesus has risen!

This is the ultimate proof that He is the Son of God. This was the proof that led Thomas to say, "My Lord and My God." This was the proof that compelled the disciples to come out of the dark corners of safety and into the light of danger, the proof that would lead them to their death.

Death no longer held power over them. Death was no longer something to be feared. If Christ be raised, then we too will be raised. And when we are raised we will be with Him forever. As D.A. Carson once put it, "I'm not suffering from anything that a good resurrection can't fix."

His resurrection is our resurrection and that brings hope. Though I suffer for a little while, I will live eternally with Him, sharing in His glory.

Notice what the angel says to Mary, "Come and see." We have stepped into the entrance of the tomb. We have found it empty. We rejoice at that

MEDITATE

news.

Our hearts have grasped onto hope because of that empty tomb. We have basked in the glory of the resurrection, but we can't stay there.

The angel continues, "...Go quickly and tell..."

This is the message of the resurrection. Come and see; go and tell. Lest we miss this message, it is repeated again, not by the angels but by Jesus Himself. As they leave to go and tell they meet Jesus. Actually it says that He met them... and said,

"Greetings," in other words, *come and see*.

So they did. They took hold of his feet; they worshiped Him. But then Jesus continues, as the angel did,

"go and tell."

So they did. They went and told the disciples of the good news, the great news...Jesus is alive!

May the resurrection of Christ compel each of us to come and see and go and tell.

PRAY

Pray for nearness with Christ, that you would be able to say, I have beheld Him today.

Pray for an increased desire to go and tell.

Pray that the resurrection compels each of us to be more intentional with sharing the gospel with those around us.

Pray for incredible church growth among all of the churches in Beijing as we are faithful to the call.

CONCLUSION

You have been on a journey of discovering the wonder of God found in Jesus Christ. Most journeys are meant to have an ending, but not this one.

We pray that this is just the beginning for you. May each of us grow deeper in our fellowship with the Father, Son, and Spirit as we continue in the disciplines of prayer, fasting, and Bible reading.

Soli Deo Gloria!