



A Lenten Devotional

Walking through the Gospel of St. Mark and the Psalms of Ascents

The Examen

Give Thanks: First, think about your day: what are you thankful for? Was the weather lovely? Did you get extra play time? Do well on a test in school or play well on your sports team? Are you healthy and strong? Each of those things is a gift from God and we should thank Him for them.

Ask for Grace: Grace is the gift that God gives us to help us to love and obey Him. One part of asking for grace is asking God, the Holy Spirit to help to know where we have done wrong, (sinned) to help us to be sorry (penitence) and to do right tomorrow. We can do this in four steps:

First: ask God to help us to know the things that we did that were wrong during the day.

Second: Ask God to help to truly be sorry for the wrong things we have done

Third: Ask God to forgive us for our faults through the sacrifice of Jesus.

Fourth: Ask for God's help to love and obey Him in the morning, for a peaceful sleep. This is a good time to say an Our Father and a Hail Mary.

Easter Sunday

Psalm 148

“Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens!”

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!

Holy Saturday

Mark 16

Jesus was dead and buried. That sounds like the end of the story doesn't it.

But what happened?

On the first day of the week, some women went to Jesus tomb and He was gone! His body hadn't been stolen. He was alive again!

No wonder the women were amazed and trembled!

Yo see Jesus is God, and God is more powerful than any number of sins. Not even the sins of everyone who every lived could keep Jesus dead. He rose and returned to heaven and God the Father welcomed Him and seated Him beside Him in the best seat.

And before He returned to heaven? He taught the disciples again and then gave them instructions to spread the good news of His Life but most importantly His death and resurrection throughout the world. That is still our job today!

Ash Wednesday

“Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return.”

Read: Genesis 2:1-8, 19-25 Genesis 3

The Imposition of Ashes (the priest putting the sign of the cross on our foreheads with ashes from last year's palms) reminds us of the story of the creation of man and of the way in which death came into the world. We remember together the effects of original sin and of the sin in our own lives as we begin this special season of penitence and reflection.

Penitence is being sorry for our sins and doing things to show we are sorry. Reflection is thinking about our lives, not just what we do but how we do it.

Sometimes reflection is given a special name. We call it The Examen and it was first taught by St. Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits. Many people go through the steps of The Examen at night before they fall asleep. It's a good way to talk to God at the end of the day.

2

Read: Mark 1:1-13

Have you ever wondered why Jesus was baptized? He was perfectly holy and didn't need to be cleansed from His sin as you and I did at our baptisms. In fact in St. Matthew's gospel, John the Baptist tells Jesus "You should baptize me!" and Jesus replies "We need to do this, because righteousness says we should." (St. Matthew 2:13-17)

And we know that God was pleased with Jesus's baptism because after He had been baptized, the Holy Spirit came down to Him like a dove and God spoke from heaven saying that Jesus was His beloved Son and that He was pleased with Him.

In the same way our baptism is a sign that God loves us and wants to give us Grace to love and obey Him. The Holy Spirit comes to us and helps us to ask for Grace and to use the Grace we are given.

As you think about your life what ways can you see that God has given you Grace? Are you using the Grace you've been given? When you are tempted to do wrong, do you lean on God's grace to help you to do right?

Good Friday

Mark 15:33-47

Jesus was the one who created the world and when the time came for Him to die, even the sun would not shine. With the sins of the whole world, from Adam and Eve on into the future resting on Him, Jesus cried out to His Father:

"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

And then He died.

The sins of the world were so many that God the Father couldn't look at His Son. And Jesus died and His Holy Obedience washed those sins away forever.

Think about that today. Think about how bad sin is that God the Father had to turn away from His beloved Son, Jesus when Jesus carried our sins.

Holy Thursday

Mark 15:16-32

The soldiers took Jesus and they laughed at Him, and beat Him. Then they gave Him his cross to carry and took Him out to crucify Him.

The crowd went too and they also laughed at Him. Even one of the thieves that was being crucified there laughed at Him.

But Jesus was quiet. He didn't answer them but concentrated on doing the job that God had sent Him to do. Dying to take away the sins of the world and make it possible for us to love and obey God.

Do you ever think about that? Without Jesus' death we could not love God. We could not obey Him. Our sins would keep us separate from Him.

And our sins would keep us separate from one another. We can't really love each other without the grace to be unselfish. And we don't have grace without Jesus' death.

Jesus knew all of this. He knew just how important it was that He should obey the Father's will and die.

3

Friday

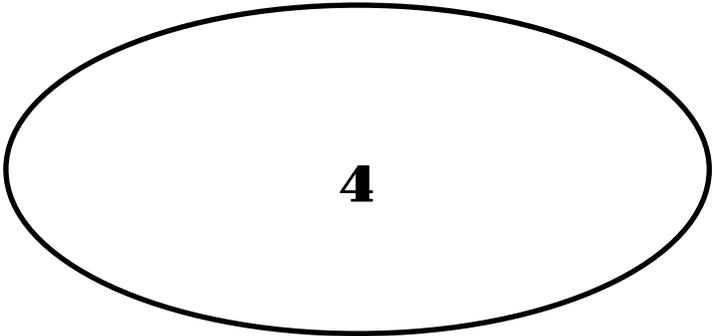
Mark 1:14-28

Jesus and John the Baptist were cousins. What do you think Jesus felt when He heard that John had been put in prison? All he had been doing was preaching that people needed to repent. He told the king that he was doing wrong, because he had stolen his brother's wife and the king got angry and threw him in prison. "Repent and do right" is not a popular thing to say and people often get angry.

What about you? Do you get angry when your parents, teachers or siblings tell you that you have done something wrong?

It takes grace to learn from other's correction. Even grown-ups have trouble with this and often have to repent of what they did wrong and the way they reacted when others told them that they had done wrong.

Jesus went right on with the work John had begun. He preached repentance and he began to call other people to help him. He also began to heal people as a sign of God's love and power in the world.

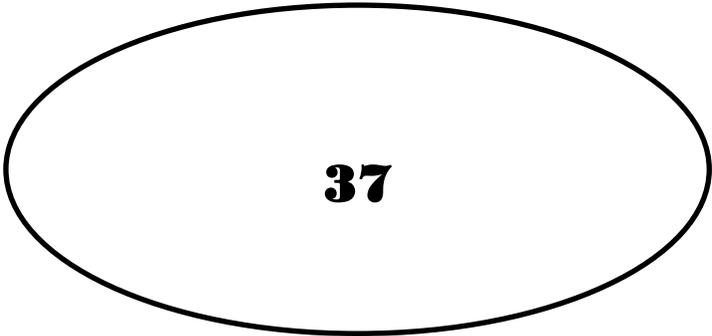


4

Mark 1:29-45

In ancient times when Jesus was alive, people believed that illness and trouble in someone's life was a sign that they had sinned. People didn't know much about the way the body worked and so they didn't understand that germs could make people ill. Many times people with serious illnesses were made to live away from their families and to call out "Unclean! Unclean!" so that people who were healthy knew to stay away.

But Jesus cared for those who had been sent away from their families and he healed them, bringing them back into their families again. In the same way God wants to heal us from our sins and bring us into His family. We begin with baptism and continue to grow into our place in God's family as we ask Jesus to help us and learn to use the grace which he gives us. Sin does cause us trouble, it breaks our relationships with each other, and our relationship with God. But God always wants to forgive us and heal those relationships if we will let him.



37

Mark 15:1-15

Now the Jews weren't allowed to kill anyone. So the chief priests took Jesus to the Roman governor and told him that Jesus was causing trouble and needed to be killed. The governor didn't see any reason he should kill Jesus but the chief priests got the crowds to shout and carry on until the governor agreed to have Jesus crucified.

But what had happened just a week earlier? The crowds had cheered for Jesus, waving palms and shouting "Hosanna"! Why had they changed their minds.

The biggest reason is that they simply didn't have faith. They liked Jesus. They thought He was interesting, and all of the miracles were wonderful, but they didn't really believe in Him.

Can we be that way? Yes. We can easily study the Bible, know lots of things about Jesus but not really believe in Him and trust Him. We have to be willing to let Him be the most important person in our lives and to try to do the things He would do. We have to love Him with our hearts and souls and not just think about Him. We have to use our strength to obey Him. We have to have faith and use the grace He gives.

36

Mark 14:66-72

While the chief priests were trying to find some reason to kill Jesus, the disciples were trying to figure out what they should do. Peter followed Jesus to the high priest's house and sat outside with some of the servants.

Pretty soon someone saw him and asked if he was with Jesus. Peter was afraid he would be arrested too, so he said "No."

Two more times, someone asked if he was with Jesus and each time Peter said, "No." After the third time Peter remembered that Jesus had told him that he would say he didn't know Jesus. He repented and wept.

It is very easy for us to do the same thing. Someone asks us, "Do you really like church?" and we think they will laugh if we say "Yes". So we say, "No." Or they ask "Do you really think Jesus rose from the dead?" and we think they won't be our friend if we say "Yes." so we say, "No."

But Jesus has promised to help us to be faithful to Him. We need to remember that, ask for grace and be strong to tell the truth. And like Peter when we fail, we must repent.

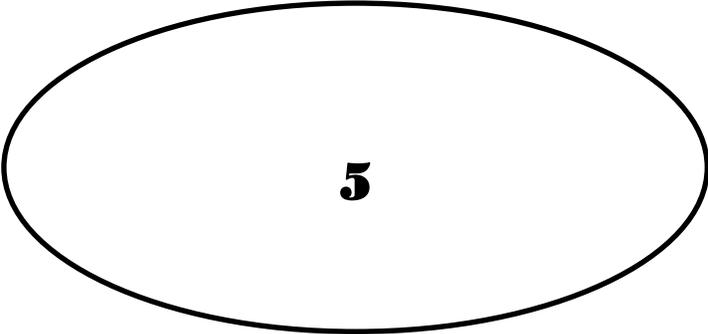
**First Sunday
of
Lent**

Psalms 120, 121, 122

It's Sunday and even though it is still the season of Lent, we still celebrate Sunday as a feast. Every Sunday is a day to remember Jesus' Resurrection and the Sundays in Lent aren't counted as part of the forty days. We still don't say "Alleluia" because we are saving that glad word for Easter morning, but we can give special attention to praising God on the Sundays in Lent.

One of the best places to learn how to praise God is in the Psalms and some of the best praise Psalms are also called the Psalms of Ascent. In ancient times the choirs would sing or chant these Psalms as they went up the steps into the Temple and the presence of God.

Sometimes these Psalms don't sound much like what we think of as praise! "Deliver me, O Lord, from lying lips and a deceitful tongue" (Psalm 120:2) doesn't sound very thankful does it? But part of praising God is trusting Him to do what He has said that He would. And He has promised to help us and deliver us from evil and temptation. So think about these Psalms and your own life and remember that asking God for the Grace He has promised is PRAISING Him too!



5

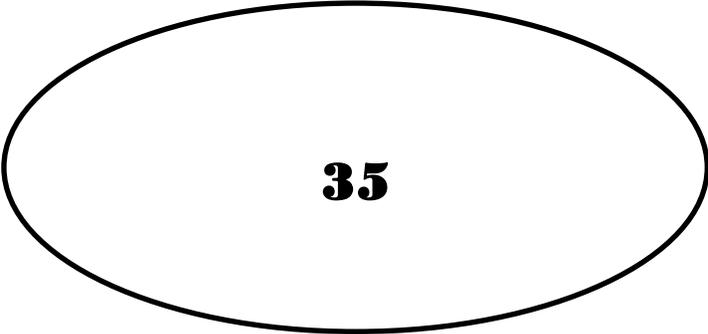
Mark 2:1-12

Don't you think that telling the lame man that his sins were forgiven was kind of an odd thing to say?

After all, he was so sick, he couldn't walk and his friends had just removed part of the roof of the house so they could get him to Jesus. Yet Jesus doesn't say, "Let me heal you." He says, "Your sins are forgiven."

The scribes thought it was strange. God is the only one who can forgive sins, and no man should say this. But Jesus knew that the people believed that something like lameness was a sign of God's judgment for sin and he wanted the lame man to know that he wasn't just being healed in his body but also in his soul!

Isn't that wonderful? Jesus loved this man and wanted him to know that he was fully healed. In the same way He heals us and forgives and even gives us someone to speak God's words of forgiveness to us. Every time we go to confession, we hear these words from the priest, "I absolve (cleanse) you from your sins in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." God tells us "Your sins are forgiven."



35

Mark 14:42-65

The chief priests and scribes arrested Jesus. Now they had a problem. They wanted to get rid of Him but they didn't have anything they could say He had done wrong.

In fact, all anyone could say was that Jesus had healed people and preached to them that they should repent of their sins and love and obey God.

The scribes thought they could solve their problem by getting people to lie about what Jesus had said and done. But the liars told stories that didn't make sense.

Finally the chief priest asked Jesus "Aren't you going to say anything? Are you the Messiah? The Promised One we've been waiting for?"

And Jesus said, "I am."

And the chief priest recognized that Jesus was saying that He was God, and he tore his clothes and said, "No, you are lying!"

Palm Sunday

Psalms 135,136

Rejoicing and giving thanks! Just like the crowds that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem! Did you shout “Hosanna” and wave your palm branches this morning?

How many things can we give God praise for?

The Psalmist praises Him for the weather, for His protection of His people from their enemies, and even for the sun.

Look around you. What do you see that you can praise God for?

Who do you see that you can praise God for?

Can you think of something about each person in the room to praise God for?

Think about yesterday. What happened that made you want to praise God?

How about all of last week?

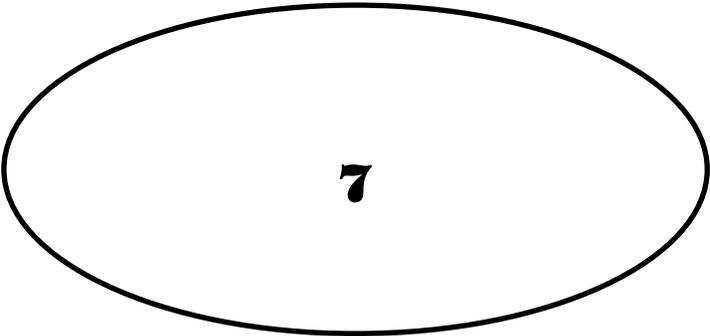
Remember those things. They will help you to remember to ask God for grace when you have a hard day, or a fight with a sibling!

6

Mark 2:13-28

What happens when you sew a piece of new cloth onto a pair of old pants? The new cloth is stronger than the old pants and often will tear the pants even worse than they were torn before!

When we start to really try to love and obey God, we are kind of like that old pair of pants. We have lots of habits of doing wrong or just not thinking about anyone but ourselves. Sometimes we feel as if we are just acting as if we love God while finding that we are still doing the same old things. Jesus tells us that He came precisely to give us the Grace to change. That’s what He means when He says “I have come to call sinners to repentance.” His love and grace change us from our old way of wanting only to please ourselves to His way of living to love and obey God.



7

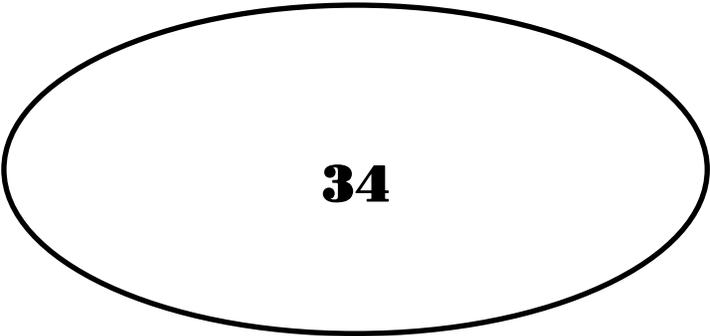
Mark 3:1-19

Why do you think the Pharisees wanted to be rid of Jesus? He was doing many wonderful things. In fact he had healed so many people that crowds followed him wherever he went and got so close that he had to get into a boat on the lake and speak to them from there.

The Pharisees even saw him heal a man's hand and their reaction was to go make plans to destroy Jesus. They didn't like Him and they didn't like what he was doing. St. Mark says that they had "hard hearts".

He means that they were stubborn and didn't like Jesus teaching and miracles because they thought they already knew what God was like and what was true. But he also means that they didn't understand why Jesus wanted to heal the people and forgive their sins. The Pharisees didn't have love and so they couldn't understand Jesus' love.

Isn't this true for us too, sometimes? We think we know what God is like and what's true and we forget that we are supposed to love others like Jesus loves us. We need grace to help us to have loving hearts!



34

Mark 14:25-42

Jesus wanted to spend some time praying before He was arrested. So He and the disciples went out to a garden to pray. Jesus went a little ways from them and prayed asking God if there were any other way to heal the world and take away sin. He knew that He had to die and He wanted to tell His Father that He would do what God the Father had asked him to do.

When He returned to the disciples He found that they had fallen asleep. He woke them up and urged them to pray. He knew that the next few days would be frightening and hard for them and He wanted them to ask God for the grace to be faithful.

We know from some of the other gospels that He told them that He had prayed for them to.

At last He told the disciples it was time to go. The scribes were coming to arrest Him.

33

Friday

Mark 14:17-25

Before He died, Jesus needed to do something very important. He needed to teach His disciples about the Eucharist and why it was important.

So during the Passover meal, He took the bread and taught the disciples. "This is my body," he said, "Take and eat it."

Then He took the cup of wine "This is my blood."

He explained that His body and blood were the signs and the guarantee of the new covenant He was making between people and God. People wouldn't have to sacrifice animals anymore as payment for their sins. Instead they could come to Jesus, believe in Him and His death and Resurrection and His blood would take away their sins. They could have a relationship with God and receive grace to follow Him.

What a wonderful gift! No wonder Jesus spent so much time talking about the importance of faith!

8

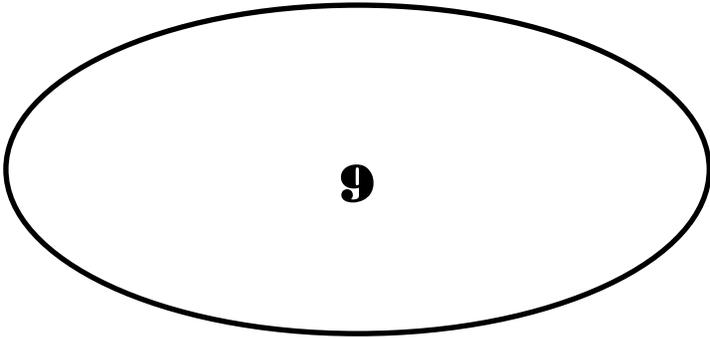
Mark 3:20-35

Some people wanted to understand how Jesus could do what He did. They didn't want to believe that He was the Messiah or the Son of God, so they tried to come up with other explanations.

Some said he was crazy and others that He was a trickster working for the Devil. Jesus pointed out that their ideas made no sense. How could the Devil heal and put things right? If he did that he would be doing God's work!

Then Jesus pointed out that healing was God's work and that those who joined him in that work were part of His family!

Each day the little things that we do in love help to heal the world around us. We are doing God's will and we are part of Jesus family!



9

Friday

Mark 4:1-20

Jesus always wanted to make sure that the people He taught and healed had hearts that were open to God and to each other. He didn't just want to heal their illnesses He wanted to heal their relationship with God so that they could have the grace to do God's work in the world.

Sometimes He told stories to help people to recognize what kind of hearts they had. In the Parable of the Sower He talked about four kinds of hearts:

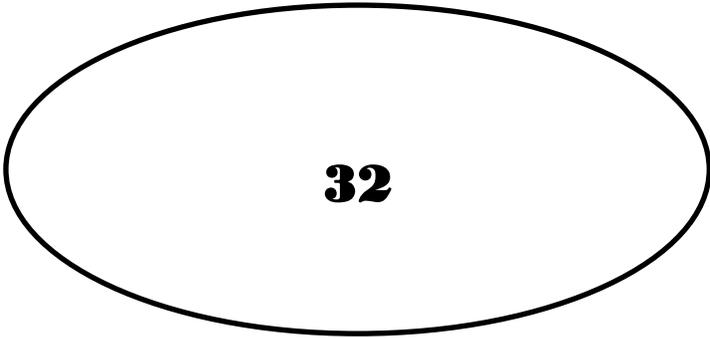
The heart which can't keep God's Word

The hard heart where the Word can't grow

The heart that is too full of other things to notice God's Word

The heart that is ready to hear and obey

The Holy Spirit helps us to have hearts that are ready to hear and obey, and the more we practice hearing and obeying the easier it is. What can you do today to help the Word of God grow in your heart?



32

Mark 14:1-16

Passover was the main feast of the Jewish year. It was the remembrance of when God had brought the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Many Jews came to Jerusalem to celebrate it and Jesus wanted to celebrate it with His disciples.

He knew that He was going to die and He wanted to give them some final teaching and to show them why He was going to die.

As the preparations for the Passover were being made one of the disciples decided that he was going to betray Jesus to the scribes so that they could arrest Jesus. Scripture doesn't tell us why Judas did this, but he did go to the scribes and they promised to pay him if he would tell them where they could find Jesus away from the crowds.

How hard it must have been for Jesus to know that Judas had done that? How hard to know that He was going to die? He could have chosen not to die, but He loved us so much that He kept on with His plan and obeyed God the Father to die on the cross.

31

Mark 13:14-37

Jesus also wanted the disciples and us to understand that eventually He would return to earth. He knew that some people would say that they were Jesus and He wanted the us to be careful not to believe them.

Most importantly He wanted us to watch and wait patiently for Him and to pray and work faithfully for His return.

We do pray for His return when we say the part of the "Our Father" that goes "Thy Kingdom come.." and the Church has been praying that for more than 2,000 years!

No one, Jesus said, knew when He would return. We are just to faithfully love and obey Him and pray for His coming.

10

Mark 4:21-34

What happens when you plant seeds in a garden? Pretty soon they sprout and grow and you can see just what kinds of seeds were planted!

The same thing happens in our hearts when we allow the love of God and the Truth of His Word to grow there. Pretty soon, other people can see what we "planted" in our hearts. We bear fruit.

Some of the fruits that we bear are:

Love	Joy
Peace	Patience
Kindness	Goodness
Faithfulness	Gentleness

Self-Control

All of these fruits can be hard to grow and take a long time to be obvious to those around us. Again we need grace to become more like Jesus.

Second Sunday

Of

Lent

Psalms 123, 124, 125

All three of these Psalms talk about how God provides for us.

One of them even says that when we trust in God we are as strong and sturdy as a mountain. Not just any mountain though, the Psalm says that we are as strong and sturdy as Mount Zion!

Mount Zion was the mountain where Jerusalem and the Temple where. It's another name for where God lives. In ancient times Mount Zion was the place where people came to talk to God and listen to what He had to say. Now we are able to meet with God as we pray at home but we are particularly able to meet with Him at church.

It's part of the reason that we think of Sunday as a "glad day". It's the day when we always go to sit in God's presence, listen to what He says in the Scripture readings and the homily and be strengthened through the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist.

Isn't it amazing? God doesn't just provide for our bodies with food, clothes, and homes. He also feeds our hearts and souls through prayer, preaching and His Body and Blood!

30

Mark 13:1-13

Jesus wanted His disciples to know that although He would go away from them, in the end He would return. He also wanted them to know that He wasn't going to leave them to follow Him without help.

So He began to teach them about how things would be when He was gone. He warned them that people would try to stop them from preaching and would hurt them and He promised them that they didn't even need to worry about what they would say. The Holy Spirit would be with them and He would give them the strength to be faithful to Jesus and the wisdom to know what to say.

Jesus knew that Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans and He wanted the disciples to be sure that He would still love, guide and protect them.

29

Mark 12:35-44

Over and over Jesus points out to his disciples and to us that we need to give everything we have to God and His work in the world.

We have to make God and others, the center of our lives and not ourselves. We should love God with all of our being, heart, soul, mind and strength. And we need to give our possessions as well.

Jesus told the rich young man that his money and stuff were making it hard for him to follow God. And in today's reading Jesus points out to the disciples that the poor woman who gave two pennies gave more generously than the rich men who gave only some of their riches.

What does that mean for us? We need to remember that everything we have, God gave us and that we are to use it to bring Him glory. We need to use what we have to help others and show them God's love.

11

Mark 4:35-5:20

Many of Jesus' disciples were fishermen. James and John, Peter and Andrew were all called to be disciples while they were in their boats. The other men were also from around the Sea of Galilee and they understood that storms there could be sudden and very fierce!

Imagine their surprise in the midst of the storm to find Jesus sleeping! Here they were frantically trying to keep the boat afloat and He was asleep? How could He be so peaceful? Didn't He care that they all might drown?

You see they didn't yet understand that Jesus was God. He had made the Sea of Galilee and He knew all about its storms. They also didn't know yet that Jesus was to die in Jerusalem on the cross not in a storm at sea.

Not knowing what is going to happen can be frightening. We often get nervous and fearful when plans change suddenly and we don't understand why or know what to do next. We can rest in this; God does know, and He loves us. If He can command the sea to be still, He can take care of us no matter what.

12

Mark 5:21-43

Faith. Jesus talked about it often. He asked people if they had faith that He could do what they had asked Him to. He told people that their faith had healed them. He compared faith to a tiny mustard seed.

What was He talking about and why is it so important?

In the book of Hebrews we are told that “Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1). Jesus wasn’t asking people if they hoped He could heal them, or if they wished He could help them. He was asking them if they were so sure that He could heal them that it was as if they were already healed.

Jarius and the woman who was bleeding acted as if they had already received the miracle they asked for. The woman was so sure Jesus could heal her that she didn’t even want to interrupt Him to ask. She just touched His garment. Jarius knows that Jesus can heal his daughter and even when someone says “She’s dead.” he keeps right on walking with Jesus to his home. That’s faith. Believing in Jesus so much that you have to act as if the miracle has already happened.

**Fifth Sunday
Of
Lent**

Psalms 133,134, 135

My mother used to quote Psalms 134 to us when we would quarrel.

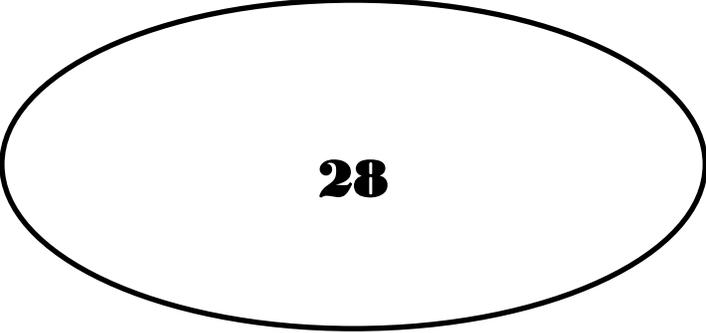
“How **pleasant** it is for brothers to live in unity.” she would say, “Pleasant and peaceful for everyone not just the ones who are quarreling.”

I always wondered how pleasant it would be to have oil poured on my head and run down my face. Maybe it would feel like the shampoo that I liked to pour out in the shower—a kind of slippery, greasy feel!

The point though isn’t the feel of the oil, it’s the way that oil can spread and spread until it covers everything.

Peace is like that. Peace can spread from one person to another until everyone has stopped quarreling and begun to act out of love. It takes time for peace to spread and patience. Gentle answers that make it hard for others to argue and accepting that they may try to fight with you anyway.

Be peaceable today and see what God will do!



28

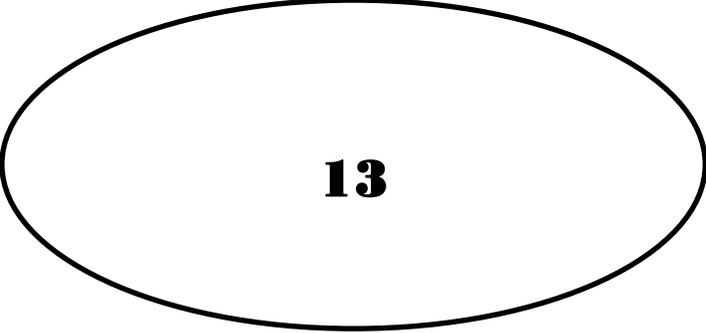
Mark 12:18-34

How can we love God? Jesus says we must do it with all of our hearts, with all of our minds and with all of our souls and with all of our strength. In other words we must love Him completely. It isn't enough to think about loving God, we must act on our love. It isn't enough to feel good about God in our hearts we must also lovingly worship Him in our souls. Every part of each of us needs to be turned towards Him in love.

And then?

Then we must love our neighbors (our siblings, friends and other people around us) as well as we love ourselves! How well do you love yourself? Are you always trying to give yourself the best things, and taking the biggest cookie or the best seat in the van for yourself? Loving your neighbor as you love yourself means that you look for opportunities to bless others with the things that you like to give to yourself.

That's not easy. God can and does give us the grace to love in just that way, through His love of us.



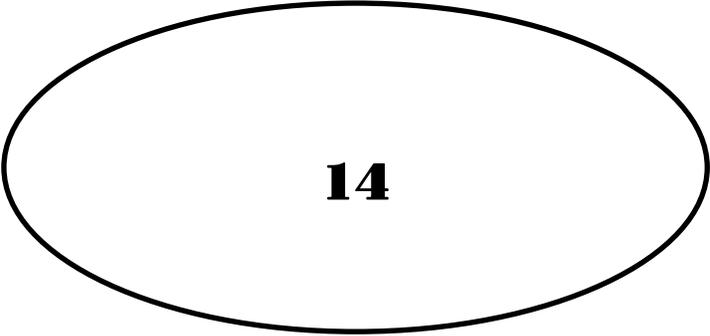
13

Mark 6:1-13

The disciples had been traveling with Jesus for a while and now it was time for them to go out and start doing God's work in the world. Jesus sent them out in pairs so they could help each other and He told them that God would provide for them. They weren't to take any extra provisions or clothes. They were just to set out walking and preach and heal the people that they met.

He warned them that some people wouldn't want to listen or be helped and that they weren't worry about it. God would judge those people.

It's the same way for us. We listen and learn in church and at home and then we must go out to do the work that God has for us. For children that can be simple work; loving siblings and friends and treating them kindly, looking around to see if people need help. Sometimes though it can be hard; when siblings and friends are grouchy, when people at the playground are unkind, use bad language, or break the rules. We don't need to worry about that though. Our job is to love and obey God and to show that love in the way that we treat others.



14

Mark 6:14-29

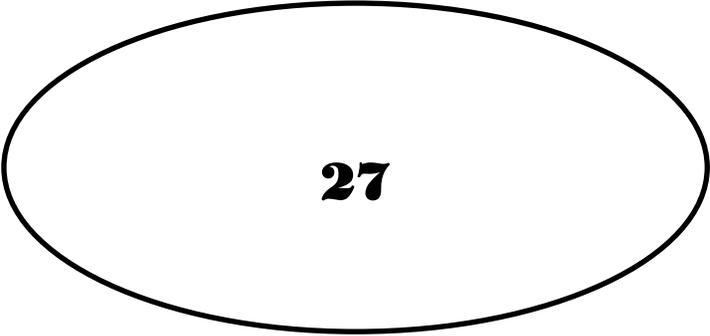
Do you remember how King Herod was so angry with John the Baptist that he had him thrown in prison? John the Baptist hadn't done anything wrong. He had told King Herod that he needed to repent and King Herod got angry instead.

Now he did an even more wicked thing. He had John the Baptist killed. He knew he was doing wrong when he commanded that John the Baptist be beheaded and he told the soldiers to do it anyway.

Has something like that ever happened to you? Have you ever done something you knew was wrong but you decided to do it anyway?

Choosing not to sin can be very hard. Sometimes it looks like so much more fun to do wrong. Sometimes we think the rules are stupid. Sometimes we just don't care, and sometimes we are angry and decide to do wrong as part of our anger.

That is why we need Jesus. We need His blood to cleanse us from sin and we need His grace to help us to choose to do right.



27

Friday

Mark 12:1-17

When a big building is put up it needs a strong foundation and the foundation are often started from a corner. Wherever the starting point is the builders are very careful to measure and be sure that the corner is square and secure. All of the rest of the measurements and the strength of the building depends on the accuracy of the first corner.

Jesus is our first corner. We know that He is true and that He is secure. If we live our lives to be like His then we also will be true and secure.

Of course, it can be hard being true and square. When it gets hard we can be tempted to look at some other corner that is easier to imitate than Jesus. We have to ask the Holy Spirit to give us grace to listen and let our lives be shaped to match the most important stone in the building.

26

Mark 11:12-33

In the morning Jesus went back into the city and found that people were using the temple as a marketplace! He drove the people who were buying and selling out and wouldn't let them buy and sell there anymore because that was not the right use of God's House.

This made the chief priests and the scribes and Pharisees very angry. And they wanted to know where He got the right to tell people they couldn't buy and sell in the temple.

Jesus knew that they wanted to cause trouble, so He asked them where John the Baptist had gotten his authority from. The chief priests didn't want to answer with the truth (from God) and they were afraid the people would be angry if they said "from men", so they lied and said they didn't know.

We can do the same thing; when someone tells us we are doing wrong we ask them how they know, or who made them the boss because we don't want to listen and learn how to do right.

15

Friday

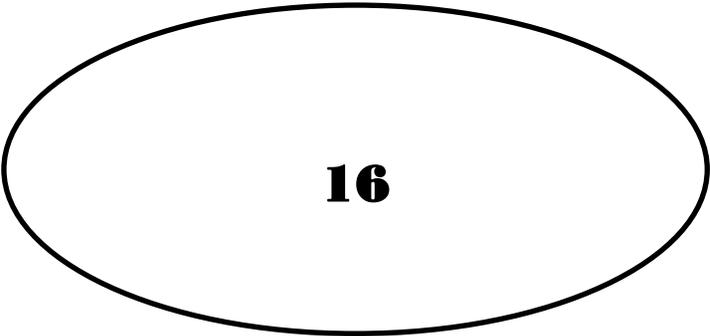
Mark 6:30-44

Jesus wanted to spend some time with the disciples. They had gone out and preached and He wanted to talk with them. But the people wanted to be with Jesus so badly that they followed Him out into the wilderness. Jesus knew He wouldn't be on earth very long and how badly the people needed to hear the truth of the Gospel. So He taught them until it was evening and fed their souls.

As it grew late the disciples asked Him how the people were going to eat? They weren't in a town. Where would they find enough bread?

Jesus asked them what they had and then multiplied five small loaves of bread and two fish into enough food for 5,000 men. He knew that the people needed food for their bodies and not just their souls and He fed them.

Can y think of some ways that Jesus feeds our bodies and our souls?



16

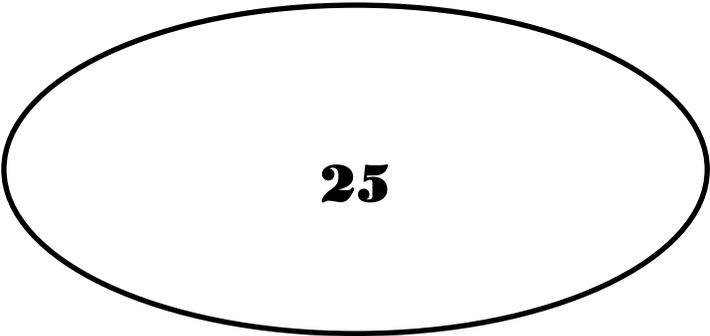
Mark 6:45-56

Even the disciples sometimes had hard hearts. It's kind of hard for us to believe isn't it? These twelve men had traveled everywhere with Jesus and seen all kinds of miracles. They had heard Him teach the people and He had spent a lot of time explaining things to them and teaching them privately.

Still when they saw Him walking on the water and heard Him calm the storm for the second time they were amazed.

Doesn't that happen to us too? We know God loves us and takes care of us but we tend to forget just how much. Then something happens and we are amazed, but we still don't understand how great God's love is.

When we don't understand we often forget and when we forget we stop trying to love God and honor Him. Instead we do the things that we like to do or go to church or even pray without paying much attention to what we are doing. Then our hearts can get hard too. When we notice that this is happening we need to repent and remember how much God has done for us and how much He loves us so that we can truly love Him.



25

Mark 11:1-11

It must have been so exciting to be in the crowd as Jesus entered Jerusalem. Palm branches waving, people shouting and spreading their clothing on the ground for him to ride over!

"Hosanna! Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"

The disciples probably wondered what was going to happen next. Was Jesus going to become a king in Jerusalem?

Jesus knew He was going to die. He looked around at the city and He went back to the little town of Bethany to spend the night. He knew that in one short week the same crowd that had cheered Him would be yelling for Him to be crucified. But He was obeying God the Father, who had sent Him and He was content.

24

Mark 10:32-52

Jesus was headed towards Jerusalem and He knew that He was going there to die. He explained this to the disciples and they listened but they didn't really understand. Again they quarreled about who would be greatest and lead and who would follow and again Jesus explained to them that they needed to serve one another not rule and boss each other.

Then He gave them an example of what service looked like. He stopped what He was doing to heal an old, blind beggarman, who shouted at Him. He spoke to him gently and kindly and told him "Go your way, your faith has healed you."

What do you do when you see a chance to serve? Do you take it?

What if a sibling needs help and yells for you to help them? Can you do like Jesus and answer them gently and help them kindly?

It's so much easier to yell back, or ignore them. So much easier to boss them around. But that's not what Jesus asks us to do.

**Third Sunday
Of
Lent**

Psalms 126, 127, 128

Did you know that children are a gift from God? Do you think of your siblings that way?

These Psalms talk about how God blesses people by making the things that they work on complete.

When we work on household chores, or schoolwork while trying to give God glory, He blesses our work and gives us grace to do a good job.

Sometimes we want to just do the parts of the job that people might notice, or rush through it without doing it well. When we ask God for grace to do good work, He gives it to us and helps us to do what we know is right even when our parents and teachers aren't looking.

17

Mark 7:1-23

Have you ever heard someone say “ My friend told me to do that naughty thing so I did. It’s his fault.”? Have you ever said that?

Jesus taught his disciples that doing wrong is something that comes from inside us. We have sinful hearts and so we choose to do wrong. It’s not our siblings fault or our friends.

It’s true, we can be tempted by someone else, but we make the decision to actually disobey.

When we choose to do wrong we often have a little moment when we could have chosen to do right. In that moment the Holy Spirit speaks to us through our conscience and asks “Are you doing right? Are you loving God?”. Sometimes we get angry with the Holy Spirit and do wrong and sometimes we listen. When we ignore the Holy Spirit often we find it easier to ignore Him the next time we want to do wrong too, but if we listen then the next time He speaks we are more able to hear and to choose to do right.

23

Mark 10:1-31

In ancient times people thought that those who were rich must be good at following God. How astonished the disciples and the rich young man must have been when Jesus told him that his riches were keeping him from the kingdom of God!

It is so easy for us to trust in something other than God. We think if we can only be good enough that God will love us. Perhaps we just need to have the right toys for all the other children to want to be our friend.

What does Jesus say? We must love and obey Him and love and serve others if we want to be in the kingdom of God.

And how do we love and obey Jesus? By putting others needs before ours. By being generous and kind. By cheerfully serving even when we would rather do something else.

Fourth Sunday

Of

Lent

Psalms 129,130,131

Sometimes we can't praise God because our lives seem so hard. Everything around us seems to be going badly and we can't find anything to praise Him for.

The Psalms talk about feeling like we are in a deep hole that we can't get out of. We want to praise God but we can't, and we want to obey Him but sometimes feel like it's too hard.

In Psalm 130 the writer says that God doesn't keep track of our wrongs but instead is ready to forgive. He says that we can wait and hope that God will strengthen us. And we know that He will forgive and help and strengthen us because He has said that He would.

His love is steadfast; it doesn't change or end. He desires to live with His people and bless them so that they don't feel like they are stuck in a deep hole but instead shout for joy!

18

Mark 7:24-37

Once again someone came to Jesus and showed great faith. This woman wasn't even an Israelite and Jesus told her that He had come first to the Israelites. But she told Him that even if He only spent a minute healing her daughter then her daughter would be healed.

She hadn't even brought her daughter to Jesus, but she believed that if Jesus said her daughter was healed then her daughter would be healed. She believed that Jesus was powerful enough that He could just say something and it was true.

Do you believe that? When you hear the words of Jesus in the Bible do you believe that they are true?

Jesus tells us that if we hear His words, believe they are true, and do what He says then we are part of His family.

19

Mark 8:1-21

Sometimes I think the disciples must have been very forgetful!

They had already seen Jesus feed 5,000 people and have 12 basketfuls of food left over. Do you remember what He had fed the people with? Five loaves and two fish.

Yet when He told the disciples that He needed to feed the people because they had been with Him for three days and were hungry, the disciples didn't know how He could do it!

So Jesus had the people sit down and He fed them again on bread and fish. And again there were leftovers.

Later in the boat Jesus warned the disciples about the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees. He used a word picture to do it, telling the disciples that they needed to watch out for the "leaven (or yeast)" of the Pharisees. What He meant were all of the rules that had been added to God's Word but the disciples thought He was fussing at them because they were in the boat and had nothing with them to eat!

They still didn't understand that Jesus is the Bread of Life and that He could feed their bodies and their souls!

22

Mark 9:30-50

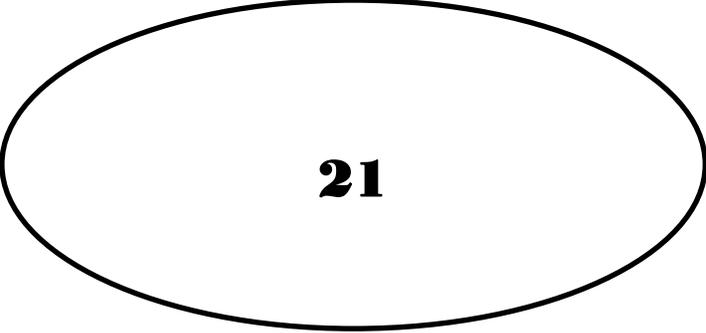
Isn't it fun to be in charge? We all like to tell other people what to do.

The disciples liked to be in charge too. In fact they argued with each other about who was the most important. Jesus knew what they were arguing about and so He taught them about who was the most important person in God's Kingdom.

He said that the person who was the greatest was the person who served the most! Doesn't that sound backwards? After all kings are leaders and servants do the cleaning and other hard work.

But what did Jesus do? How did He lead? He became a servant in order to save us and we follow Him because we can see how much He loves us because of His willingness to serve.

So how can we be leaders? By loving and serving our friends and siblings. By being the kindest person in the group and helping everyone else to have a good time. By choosing to help others rather than thinking of ourselves. That is being like Jesus.



21

Friday

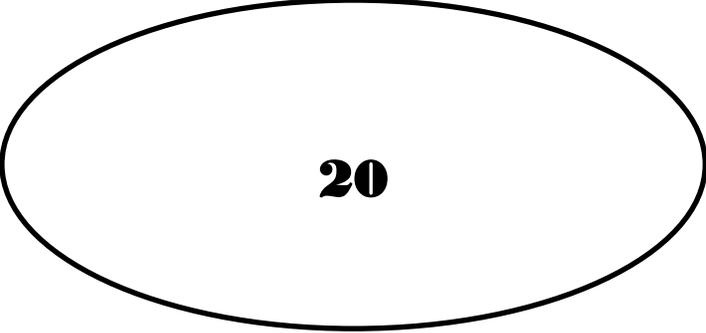
Mark 9:2-29

Have you ever known someone who was sick for a long time? The boy in this story had been very ill since he was a child and his father wanted Jesus to heal him. Jesus told him that it was possible for his son to be healed if the father believed that Jesus could heal him.

The father knew he couldn't have enough faith on his own, so he said to Jesus "Help me to believe!"

We can ask Jesus the same thing. When we're sitting in church thinking about what we had for breakfast instead of what the priest is saying, we can ask Jesus to help us listen and believe what we are hearing. When we are having family devotions and we want to open our eyes to peek at our siblings we can pray "Jesus, please help me to pray to."

Jesus is always ready to help us to believe in Him and follow Him. All we have to do is ask.



20

Mark 8:22-9:1

Following Jesus isn't easy. It's hard to choose to do right when others are choosing to do wrong and look like they are having fun! It's hard to speak kindly when we really want to yell at someone. It's hard to put our books or toys down and do jobs with a cheerful heart when Mom calls us. It's hard to treat other people and their needs as more important than ourselves.

But that's just what Jesus says we must do. He says we must do as He did, deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow Him.

So just what did Jesus do?

He gave up living with God in heaven where everything was beautiful, healthy and holy, to come to earth and live where things are often ugly, sick and wicked. He chose to care for the people even when He wanted to rest or spend time with the disciples. Most of all He chose to die on the cross so that we could be made holy like Him.

Now He asks us to believe in Him and to use the grace He gives us to be like Him.