

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 4/1/18

Prayer - Use this prayer to begin your time with God each day.

Lord Jesus, you rose from the dead so that I can know that good overcomes evil, that hope conquers despair, and that life triumphs over death. Thank you for helping me find hope at the empty tomb and in the resurrection of our Lord, Jesus Christ. I pray in the name of our risen Lord. Amen.

Monday – Read Mark 16:1-20. These verses include both the shorter and longer ending of Mark’s Gospel. Jesus’ resurrection challenges us to rethink everything we have known to be true. It was not easy for the women or the disciples to grasp what had happened at first. Mark tells us that at first the women told no one what they had seen because they were terrified. Notice how none of the disciples believed in the resurrection at first. They had to experience the presence of the resurrected Jesus before they came to believe and to understand what God had done in raising Jesus from the dead. Two thousand years later, we rely on the witness of those first Christians who encountered our risen Lord. Ask God to help you experience the resurrection power of our risen Lord.

Tuesday – Read Matthew 28:1-15 and I Corinthians 15:3-8. Did Jesus really rise from the dead, or did his disciples take his body and make up the whole story? Matthew tells us that the priests and the elders tried to cause people to doubt Jesus’ resurrection by bribing the soldiers to tell the lie that Jesus’ disciples stole the body. However, Paul tells us that Jesus appeared to over 500 people after he was raised from the dead. The historical evidence points to the reality that Jesus conquered the grave. How can you help others come to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? Ask God to help you embrace the hope we find in Jesus’ resurrection.

Wednesday – Read Mark 16:9-11 and John 20:1-18. At first, the empty tomb seemed like one more reason to weep. When Mary saw the risen Jesus she thought he was the gardener at first. Only John tells us that Jesus’ tomb was in a garden, and he wants us to remember the Garden of Eden as we hear this story. Everything went wrong in the Garden of Eden, but now, God was making everything right again through Jesus’ resurrection in another garden. When Mary realized that the gardener was Jesus, her sorrow turned into joy. So, she went and told the disciples, “I have seen the Lord.” In the face of death and despair, we all need the hope that Mary Magdalene found at the empty tomb. We can help others find hope at the tomb by telling them the Good News that Jesus really is alive. Ask God to help you share the Good News of Jesus’ resurrection with the people in your life.

Thursday – Read Luke 24:1-12. The two angels at the tomb helped the women to remember that Jesus had told them that he would suffer and die and rise on the third day. This helped them to begin to believe that God had raised Jesus from the dead. However, when they told the disciples, Luke tells us that these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. Why do you think it difficult for some people to believe in the resurrection? In all of the Gospels we see that the disciples had to experience the presence of the Risen Lord before they believed in his resurrection. As you pray, consider what Jesus’ resurrection means for you.

Friday – Read Mark 16:12-13 and Luke 24:13-35. As they walked towards Emmaus, Cleopas and the other disciple were still trying to process Jesus’ suffering and death on the cross along with the news that the women had shared with them that Jesus was alive. They were disappointed, disillusioned, and overwhelmed with despair. We all go through times of disappointment, despair, and disillusionment. It is at these times that Jesus comes and walks with us. Notice that it was Jesus who began to explain the scriptures to them to help them understand what God was doing through Jesus’ death and resurrection. Ask Jesus to help you grow as you study the Bible in your time of devotion and in your Small Group. If you are not in a small group, consider joining one of our Sunday school classes next Sunday.

Saturday – Read Mark 16:14-16, Luke 24:33-49, and John 20:19-23. Notice the similarities between these three accounts of Jesus’ appearance to the disciples on that Sunday evening. Even as Jesus stood before them, Luke tells us *while in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering...* How does it make you feel to know that Jesus made every effort to help them overcome their doubts so that they could believe in his resurrection? Both Luke and John report Jesus’ command to go into the world to share the Good News. Jesus empowered his disciples to be witnesses by breathing the Holy Spirit onto them. The Hebrew word *ruach* means wind, breath, or spirit. Hold your hand in front of your mouth and breathe; that is how close the Holy Spirit is to you. How does it make you feel to know that the Holy Spirit is with you and will give you the words to speak when you share your witness and the Good News that Jesus is alive? Ask the Holy Spirit to help you offer grace and forgiveness to someone you know.

Lectionary Readings: Acts 10:34-43; Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24; Colossians 15:1-11; Mark 16:1-8.

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