

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 1/27/19

Monday – Read Mark 6:6-13. **Sent Out, Two by Two.** In the first five chapters of Mark's Gospel, Jesus calls disciples to follow him, and they observe the way Jesus does ministry by preaching, teaching, healing, and casting out demons. Now, flawed as they are, Jesus gives them authority and sends his disciples, two by two, to share in his ministry. These disciples did the same things they had seen Jesus do. They preached and called people to repent of their sins. They cast out many demons and offered healing to people by anointing them with oil. Jesus' ministry spread across the land because he had confidence in his disciples. Jesus has called you to be his disciple, and he has confidence in you to share in his ministry. Ask Jesus to empower you to do the ministry he has called you to do.

Tuesday – Read Mark 6:14-29. **The Death of John the Baptist.** Herod did not want to harm John. He just wanted to domesticate him. However, when push came to shove, Herod was just as sorry as he could be, but John had to go. When the church rises up to be the church, the world rises up to be the world. When the world rises up to be the world, Jesus Christ rises from the dead. When Herod found out about the church being the church, he slapped his forehead and exclaimed, "I thought I had that nailed down. John the Baptist has been raised from the dead." Mark wants us to know that you cannot nail down Jesus. When the world is being the world, Jesus Christ is being Lord. Ask Jesus to be the Lord of your life and to conquer evil systems in our world.

Wednesday – Read Mark 6:30-32 and Exodus 20:8-11. **Rest for a While.** The fourth commandment helps us remember that God rested on the seventh day of creation. What does this teach us about the rhythm of life that God intends for us to have? Jesus promises to give us rest, and in Mark's Gospel Jesus tells his disciples, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." When we work hard we need times of rest and retreat, and when we have experienced great loss we need time away to be with loved ones and to receive God's compassion, mercy, and grace. In what ways do you take time for rest and retreat in your life? What hurts do you need God to heal? Ask God to heal your hurts and to help you carve out the time you need for rest and retreat.

Thursday – Read Mark 6:33-34; Numbers 27:15-17; and Ezekiel 34:5-6, 11-16. **Like Sheep without a Shepherd.** Jesus' plans for a retreat were spoiled. The crowds saw where they were going and beat them there. Jesus' compassion for the crowd, who were like sheep without a shepherd, took precedence over his concern for his disciples and himself. Bone tired or not, he began to teach them many things. As Ezekiel 34 suggests, Jesus is the Good Shepherd who seeks, saves, rescues, and feeds his sheep. Here, Jesus feeds his sheep by teaching them the Word of God. In our church we study God's Word in our Sunday school classes and small groups. As we take time to read God's Word we encounter the Good Shepherd who cares for us and feeds our souls. If you are not currently part of a small group, consider attending one of our Sunday school classes or Nichols Thrills Studies: *Why Jesus?* or our *Congregational Care Minister Training*. Pray for the people in your small group.

Friday – Read Mark 6:35-40; II King 4:42-44; and II Corinthians 8:12. **Give What You've Got.** As evening approached, the disciples told Jesus to send the crowd away so they could go and feed themselves, but Jesus said, "You give them something to eat." The disciples responded out of scarcity and complained that a half-year's wages would not be enough to feed all of the people. So, Jesus asked them to give him what they did have. He took their five loaves and two fish, multiplied them, and fed the entire crowd of 5,000 people. Jesus does not ask us to give what we lack but rather what we have. Then Jesus takes our gifts, multiplies them, and makes them more than enough to do what he calls us to do. Do you live with a scarcity mentality or an abundance mentality. As you pray, ask Jesus to give you the faith to give generously to Jesus so that he may show you his abundance.

Saturday – Read Mark 6:41-44; 14:22-25. **A Holy Meal.** Jesus took the bread and the fish, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. He did the same thing when he instituted the Lord's Supper. He took the bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples.

Every meal with Jesus is a holy meal to give thanks to God and to share with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Something very special happens when we share a meal together.

Whether we are gathering around the Lord's Table to receive Holy Communion or gathering for a Fellowship Meal, a Nichols Thrills Meal, a Funeral Meal, or a Harvest Dinner, these are holy moments and an opportunity for us to welcome even more people into fellowship with Jesus Christ. When we receive Holy Communion, Jesus gives himself to us fully and offers us forgiveness of our sins. In your prayer, thank God for Jesus' sacrifice and for the Holy Meal that helps us to remember what Jesus has done.

Lectionary Readings: Nehemiah 8:1-10; Psalm 19; I Corinthians 12:12-31; Luke 4:14-21.

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