

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 2/3/19

Monday – Read Mark 4:35-41. **Jesus Calms the Storm.** Jesus was leading his disciples to the other side of the Sea of Galilee where the gentiles lived. The disciples are still not sure who Jesus is or if they can trust him. They are certainly not convinced that he has their best interests or well-being in mind, so when the storm arises on the sea, they wake up Jesus and ask him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” Jesus rebuked the wind and said to the sea, “Be still!” Then the wind ceased and there was dead calm. Jesus said to the disciples, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” Jesus invites us to have faith and trust in him because Jesus is Lord. He is lord over life and death. He is Lord over the storms in our lives. So, Jesus calls us to put our trust and faith in him as he leads us into new mission fields in unfamiliar territory even when the wind is howling and the waves are large. As you pray, ask Jesus to help you trust him to be with you through the storms and to help you do what he is calling you to do.

Tuesday – Read Mark 6:45-52. **Have we understood the lesson of the loaves?** They had just witnessed the miracle of Jesus feeding the 5,000, but now they were in a boat that was being battered by the waves. When they saw Jesus coming to them, they thought he was a ghost. When he got into the boat the wind settled down. His disciples were astounded, for they had not learned the lesson of the loaves. They had forgotten that it was Jesus who put them in the boat. They were terrified by the storm, but Mark tells us that Jesus came to them. Jesus is with us through every storm in our lives. What helps you to trust Jesus when you are facing one of life’s storms? Pray for God to help you grow in your faith and trust in God’s plan for your life.

Wednesday – Read Mark 8:1-10. **Feeding the 4,000.** In Mark 6, Jesus fed 5,000 people on Israel’s side of the Sea of Galilee. Twelve baskets of food were left over which may represent the twelve tribes of Israel. God cares for God’s people. In Mark 8, Jesus fed 4,000 people on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, and seven baskets of food were left over which may represent the seven nations of Canaan. It’s as if Jesus was saying, “Good news is coming for the twelve tribes of Israel, but good news is coming for the seven nations of Canaan, too. Twelve tribes, seven nations – it really doesn’t matter to me. I love them all. It’s good news for this side, and good news for the other side.” As you pray, ask Jesus to give you a heart for people who are similar to you and a heart for people who are different from you. Then, pray for both groups.

Thursday – Read Mark 8:11-21. **“Do you not yet understand?”** The Pharisees came to argue with Jesus and test him because he did not measure up to their preconceived ideas. Jesus simply sighs at them as an expression of weary, sadness, and frustration at their blindness. The disciples have watched Jesus calm a storm, walk on water, feed 5,000 people, and feed 4,000 people, and still they misunderstand Jesus. Leaven represented something evil, and when Jesus warns them to beware the leaven of the Pharisees, they are so dense that they think he is scolding them for having no bread. You can sense Jesus’ frustration with the disciples as he reminds them of all they have seen him do. “Do you not yet understand?” They have still not learned the lesson of the loaves. Mark tells us that they had one loaf in the boat. Jesus is the Bread of Life, and he is still with them. Even when we fail to learn the lesson of the loaves, Jesus stays with us and invites us to walk with him until we understand. Ask Jesus to help you learn the lesson of the loaves.

Friday – Read Mark 8:27-33. **“Who do people say that I am?”** This is one of the most important questions in all of life. Who is Jesus? In Jesus’ own time as well as in 21st century there are many people who do not know who Jesus is. Peter proclaimed, “You are the Messiah.” The Hebrew word *Messiah* and the Greek word *Christ* mean *the anointed one, the King, or the Savior*. As Christians, we make following, serving, and worshiping Jesus our highest priority in life. If someone you know asked you, “Who is Jesus?” what would you say? As you spend time in prayer today, think about the people in your life who need to know who Jesus is, and ask God to work through you to tell them.

Saturday – Read Mark 8:34-38. **“Take up your cross, and follow me.”** Jesus is our King. Christians are followers of *the Christ, the Messiah, the Anointed One*. In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus predicts his death three times, and yet the disciples fail to understand what he is trying to tell them. Along the journey, Jesus continues his teaching and healing ministry. He tells the people, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.” What kind of king is this who willingly journeys towards death on a cross? What kind of kingdom is this? What does Jesus invite you to do as one of his disciples? Spend some time praying and thinking about what it means for you to deny yourself and take up your cross to follow Jesus.

Lectionary Readings: Jeremiah 1:4-10; Psalm 71:1-6; I Corinthians 13:1-13; Luke 4:21-30.

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