

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 4/14/19

Monday – Read Luke 23:32-38. **Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.** Jesus looked upon those who had crucified him, the people who were insulting him, the thieves on his left and his right, the chief priests, and the Roman soldiers who were gambling for his clothes. Then he prayed, “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.” In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, ⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven.” He really meant what he said, and on the cross, Jesus prayed for those who were crucifying him. Jesus is willing and able to forgive even our darkest sins. As you pray, confess your sins to Jesus, and ask him to forgive you. Thank Jesus for his willingness to pay the price for your sins.

Tuesday – Read Luke 23:39-43. **Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.**

Even as Jesus hung on the cross he was still focused on his mission of seeking and saving the lost. As one of the criminals hanging next to him derided Jesus, the criminal on his other side defended Jesus. “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹ And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” Do you think he understood the Doctrine of the Trinity or any of the Theories of Atonement? Do you think he understood that Jesus was fully human and fully divine? Do you think he was ever baptized? Jesus offered this man the same grace he offers to you and me. He told that thief, “Today you will be with me in Paradise.” Pray for someone you know who needs the love of Jesus and a church home. Invite that person to come to church with you on Easter Sunday.

Wednesday – Read John 19:16-27. **Behold your son. Behold your mother.** Mary and the Apostle John are standing at the foot of the cross. Mary is weeping as she watches her son writhe in pain. For six hours she stands there, helpless to do anything. Jesus looks down on her, and though he is in tremendous pain, he says to her, “Woman, here is your son.” And he says to John, “Here is your mother.” As William Barclay writes, “There is something infinitely moving in the fact that Jesus in the agony of the Cross, when the salvation of the world hung in the balance, thought of the loneliness of his mother in the days ahead.” Few of us in our death-denying culture are at ease thinking about our mortality. Often we put off making a will or other provisions for the event of our death. Are you willing to deal with your discomfort for the sake of those who depend on you? If you haven’t, will you make the needed plans to help your family, and your church family, when you are gone? Pray about doing that as an Easter gift to God and your loved ones.

Maundy Thursday – Matthew 27:45-49; Mark 15:33-36; Psalm 22:1-31. **My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?** Jesus thought of Psalm 22 as he hung from the cross. This Psalm begins in agony, but notice how it moves on to complete faith in God’s ability to redeem suffering. Jesus clung to this hope even as he suffered and died on the cross. He had complete faith that his Father had the power to redeem his suffering death by raising him up on the third day. How does it help you to know that the worst thing is never the last thing? *Future generations will be told about the Lord, and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.* Who will you tell about what Jesus has done for us? Join us for our *Maundy Thursday Service* at 12:00 and our *Maundy Thursday Lunch* at 12:30.

Good Friday – Read John 19:28-30. **I Thirst. It is finished.** Only John mentions that when Jesus said, “I am thirsty,” they put a sponge full of wine on a branch of hyssop and held it to his mouth. John wants us to remember that on the first Passover, the Israelites dipped a hyssop branch in the blood of the sacrificial lamb and used it to sprinkle the blood on their doorposts so the angel of death would pass over their homes. Then Jesus said, “It is finished,” and died. He had fulfilled his mission to offer forgiveness and salvation to the world. Then Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took his body and placed it in a new tomb in a garden. Join us at 6:30 p.m. for our *Tenebrae Service of Darkness*.

Saturday – Read Luke 23:44-49 and Psalm 31:1-24. **Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.** Jesus had faith that that his Father would redeem his suffering death on the cross. In his final statement on the cross Jesus quotes Psalm 31:5, ⁵ *Into your hand I commit my spirit; you have redeemed me, O LORD, faithful God.* Jesus was both the high priest and the sacrificial lamb that was offered on our behalf to make atonement for our sins. The ancients used to say about Jesus, “He is like us, so he will help us. He is not like us, so he can help us.” Jesus understands what it feels like to suffer, and he loves you so very dearly. Spend some time expressing your love to Jesus in prayer.

Lectionary Readings: *Liturgy of the Palms* - Luke 19:28-40; Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

Liturgy of the Passion - Isaiah 50:4-9; Psalm 31:9-16; Philippians 2:5-11; Luke 22:14-23:56.

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