

Prayer and Study Guide

Daily Scripture Readings – 4/7/19

Monday – Read Matthew 27:26-34. **Mocking the King.** Invite God to help you see and understand the events that took place in Jesus' torture and humiliation at the hands of the Roman soldiers. Next take a sheet of paper and turn it sideways, making four columns, one for each gospel. Each day make notes of your impressions from reading that particular gospel account, and note the similarities and differences in them. Can you imagine yourself as Jesus, naked, surrounded by 480 soldiers hurling insults, spitting, and denigrating you. How does Jesus feel? What were they trying to do to Jesus? Did they succeed? Can you see his dignity, even as he stood before these soldiers? This is God's story, and God intends for us to hear and see certain things from this story. What does it teach us about humankind? What does it teach us about God? How does this story call you to follow and serve Jesus? Confess the times when you have been mean-spirited and ask for God's forgiveness.

Tuesday – Read Mark 15:15-23. **Carrying the Cross.** Begin your study with prayer, inviting God to help you see and hear what he intends for you to understand from the story of the suffering of Jesus. What details are different between Mark's and Matthew's accounts? What is the same? Why would the Roman soldiers act in this way? What was the soldiers' tone of voice as they spoke to Jesus? We have learned about the Substitutionary Theory of Atonement and the Moral Influence Theory of Atonement. Which of these theories is more meaningful to you? Why? Mark tells us the name of Simon's sons; the other gospels do not. This likely indicates that the church to which Mark was writing his gospel knew who Alexander and Rufus were. Read Romans 16:13. Assuming this is the same Rufus, what does this tell you about the impact of carrying the cross upon Simon of Cyrene? Why did Jesus refuse the wine mixed with myrrh? Ask God to give you the strength to carry the cross in your life.

Wednesday – Read Luke 23:11-12, 26-32. **Women of Jerusalem.** How does Luke's account of Jesus' torture differ from Matthew's and Mark's? Herod and Pilate became friends – united by their common guilt in condemning an innocent man. Herod Antipas, the puppet king of Galilee, mocked Jesus. Luke tells us about the women following Jesus and the grief and wailing of those watching him being led to Calvary. Only the women had the courage to grieve publicly for Jesus. The disciples all abandoned Jesus. In verse 28-31, Jesus foretells the coming destruction of Jerusalem. Because the people chose Barabbas and the path of violent conflict with Rome as opposed to Jesus' call to sacrificial love and loving their enemies, the city would be destroyed within four decades. Prior to the destruction there was a terrible famine in the city as it was surrounded by Roman forces when many children starved to death. Pray for hungry children and for peace in our world.

Thursday – Read John 19:1-7, 16-17. **Behold the Man.** John's account of the flogging and humiliation of Jesus takes place prior to Jesus being sent to be crucified. Pilate wanted to gain the sympathy of the crowd for Jesus by presenting him as completely humiliated. ⁵ *So Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, "Behold the man!"* Take a moment to look at Jesus, beaten and bloodied. How does his suffering move you? The chief priests cried out for him to be crucified. In John's account Jesus carries the cross by himself, and Simon of Cyrene is not mentioned. Jesus began carrying his own cross, but when he could not continue Simon was forced to help. As you think about Jesus carrying his cross, pray for Jesus to help you pick up your cross and follow him.

Friday – Read Isaiah 50:4-9. **"I gave my back to those who struck me."** Today we'll look at verses from Isaiah that were fulfilled in Jesus' torture and humiliation. Jesus was likely thinking of these words as he stood before the soldiers. What comfort would they have brought him? How did his suffering bring us peace with God? In what ways does Jesus' willingness to suffer for you touch your heart? How does this help you think about your own willingness to suffer for the sake of offering Good News to the people in your life? Thank Jesus for his love for you and pray for how you can share his love with others.

Saturday – Read Isaiah 52:14-53:12. **By His Bruises We Are Healed.** How do you deal with suffering? As Jesus suffered to fulfill these scriptures in Isaiah, he seemed to understand that God would use his suffering to offer healing to people and to draw them closer to God. As Christians we do not believe that everything happens for a reason or that God causes us to suffer; however, we do believe that God is able to redeem the suffering we experience. Ask God to give you strength to endure suffering and faith to know that God's redemptive purposes are at work in your life.

Lectionary Readings: Isaiah 43:16-21; Psalm 126; Philippians 3:3b-14; John 12:1-8.

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