



2026 READING PLAN

week 1

Welcome to Week 1!

Let's begin the new year by reading the Gospel of Luke together!

From now until Easter, our reading plan will walk us through the Gospel of Luke. If we desire to be a church that truly learns to ENCOUNTER Jesus, there is no better place to begin than with Jesus himself. Luke's Gospel offers a rich and beautiful portrait – filled with miracles, parables, sermons, the story of Jesus' birth, and ultimately a deep glimpse into the very heart of who Jesus is.

Follow along by visiting this page for the daily readings and devotionals prepared for you by Canterbury's Pastors and Staff.

This week's readings will cover:

Monday: Luke 1: 1-25

Tuesday: Luke 1: 26-45

Wednesday: Luke 1: 46-56

Thursday: Luke 1: 57-80

Friday: Luke 2: 1-20



WEEK 1 | MONDAY

Luke 1: 1-25

Weekly Word: PREPARE

Every Monday, we will give you a weekly word to focus on. Today's word is prepare. Our big hope this Spring and for the new year is that we ENCOUNTER God more because we believe it will be transformational for all of us. In order to ENCOUNTER God, maybe it takes a little bit of preparation. Preparation is active and trains us to be receptive. Let each day be an act of preparation for the work God can and will do through us. Every Monday-Friday, we will provide a scripture reading plan with the hope that more time in scripture and more time with God will truly transform us to be more like Jesus.

We believe in a simple formula:

More time with God each day = slowly becoming more like Jesus

Becoming more like Jesus = transformation in our lives and community

Help us make this a reality. Set aside some time each day to prepare for the work of God.

Blessings!

Matthew Montgomery

Reflection:

What an introduction to the Gospel of Luke! Before we get to Jesus, Luke sets the scene for us. In many ways, it's a callback to the Old Testament. From the beginning, we have a king (Herod), a priest (Zechariah), an angel (Gabriel), and now a new prophet (John the Baptist) all on the stage. Before we get to Jesus' birth, Luke wants us to learn about John the Baptist. John the Baptist's calling is laid out for us in verse 17, "make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

In many ways, that is what we most want from our daily reading plan. We want all of us to be prepared and made ready for the work of God.

If our church-wide goal for 2026 and for this Spring is to become more like Jesus, then maybe we need to follow the example of Luke chapter 1. Before Jesus appears, we, like John the Baptist, need to do a little bit of preparation. For the entirety of this Spring, let each day begin with reading the Bible. Let us dive into the gospel of Luke verse by verse. Let this become our daily habit so that we as a church will be prepared to ENCOUNTER and make ready the way of the Lord.

Practice:

For today's practice, let it be a short and simple prayer:

"God prepare us (as a church and as individuals) to encounter you daily. Bless our attempts each day and today as begin this journey. Amen."

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What can I set aside to look for God today?
2. What kind of preparation helps you feel close to God?
3. How can I make someone's day lighter/help others prepare for God as well?



WEEK 1 | TUESDAY

Luke 1: 26-45

Reflection:

In our passage today, the name of Jesus appears for the first time in the Gospel according to Luke. The first person to hear this name was a young girl named Mary. As a female who likes to sing, growing up I was often playing Mary in a Christmas production at church. I remember feeling the weight of the role, not quite understanding the significance of the story, but understanding that this person Jesus would come to change our hearts and our world. Do you remember the first time you heard the name Jesus? If you are like me and grew up in Sunday School, you may not have a specific memory, but remember puppet shows, songs like Jesus Loves Me, and coloring book sheets. Jesus just kept showing up as I got older and joined the youth group, when I went to college and joined Bible studies, on mission trips, and as a parent of my own children. This week marks the beginning of a new year, a blank slate that is full of potential. I want to invite you to join me in thinking about how Jesus is going to show up in our lives each and every day this year.

Grace,
Natalie Moon

Practice:

Spend some time reading and thinking about the many names of Jesus:

Christ (the Messiah)	Son of God
Son of Man	Savior
Lord of Lords	Lamb of God
The Word	Alpha and Omega
Immanuel (God with us)	Prince of Peace
Wonderful Counselor	Mighty God
Good Shepherd	High Priest
The Bread of Life	The Light of the World
King of the Jews	Rabbi/Teacher
The Way, the Truth, and the Life	

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. As we go on this journey together to become more like Jesus, spend some time thinking about the ways that Jesus has appeared in your life?
2. Have you experienced his divinity as a shepherd, counselor, or teacher?
3. In what ways would you like to see Jesus appear in your life this coming year?

WEEK 1 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 1: 46-56

Reflection:

Today we hear Mary's song the Magnificat! Mary, who is likely a young teenager, offers us one of the most beautiful, prophetic, and powerful passages of scripture. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once called her song, "the wildest hymn ever sung." It starts out fun and full of praise, but the song quickly shifts in tone. Mary asks God to "scatter the proud" to "bring down the powerful from their thrones" and to "send the rich away empty." Imagine being Mary in this moment. She is surprisingly and impossibly pregnant. Her whole world has been turned upside down and this song is her response. What incredible faith! Mary sings about God's activity. How God regularly can turn our worlds upside down in the best of ways. She speaks of how the first will be last and the last will be first. Maybe this is why her soul "magnifies the Lord." When God showed up in her life, her whole world got more complicated. However, isn't that what our souls want most? To be part of God's activity in this world? I once heard the preacher Adam Hamilton call this, "the paradox of blessedness." How it can be so comforting and assuring when God is in our life, and yet also that usually means some discomfort will follow. The discomfort is being a part of God's plan. God likes to send us to people and places we would never expect to go. God seems to enjoy turning our world's upside down.

How is it with your soul?

In preparing our reading plan, we have dubbed each Wednesday as "Wesley Wednesday" based on our founder of Methodism John Wesley. We want to throw in a little bit of methodism each week. John Wesley had a lot to say about this song of Marys, but his main focus is on God's saving grace. How God "lifts up the lowly" and "fills the hungry with good things." God is on the side of the hurting.

John Wesley famously asked all people in his life this question: "how is it with your soul?" That question really cuts straight through the small talk. Asking someone "how is it with your soul," is asking about what is really going on in their lives. Its a bit of a scary question, because we may not be ready to hear the answer. However, what can be more important than checking in on our friends and families souls?

John Wesley took the time to ask and listen closely to the response. He celebrated with people in good times when they were able to say "my soul magnifies the Lord." He also sat with listened with anyone whose souls felt heavy. Maybe today this could be a world upside down question. Take a second to ask how it is with your soul, and make space to do the same for someone else. If we as a church all do this today, who knows what God can and will do with us.

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

God's work often turns our worlds upside down. In a reminder of that work, let's do something backwards or in reverse. Instead of normal small talk, keep on a friend or family member with the famous question from John Wesley: How is it with your soul?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Mary sang, "my soul magnified the Lord?" What can you do to magnify the Lord in your day?
2. How is it with your own soul?
3. When was a time you experienced the "paradox of blessedness?"



WEEK 1 | THURSDAY

Luke 1: 57-80

Reflection:

John is a name that is translated into “God is Gracious”. If you have had the chance to study the Old Testament, you will discover that names had deep significance in each family. It linked you to the past, to your ancestral land, and to hope for the future. We read in this passage about the shock of those present when Zechariah (a priest) agreed with his wife to pivot from tradition. In a bold and faithful act, he confirmed the name John, God is Gracious. Zechariah could then again SPEAK!

For today’s refresh moment, I have linked one of my all-time favorite worship songs. The lyrics come directly from Psalm 103 ([link Psalm 103](#)) in which one of the root words for John’s name appears, “gracious”. I imagine when the people heard John’s name, that maybe they were reminded of this passage (and the MANY passages that mention the graciousness of God). No wonder people marveled at this child and wondered at the potential of his life.

Peace,
Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH – We invite you to read this scripture in a new place to give you a fresh perspective. Maybe think of a place of family significance to you, or even visit the chapel at Canterbury.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Why do you think Zechariah was unable to speak during Elizabeth’s pregnancy? Do you ever feel the presence of God in stillness or silence? What is it about being silent that helps illuminate the mysteries of God?
2. John’s name translated from the Hebrew translates to “God is Gracious”. Have you ever experienced the graciousness and compassion of God? We invite you to spend some time in prayer while you listen to this song based on Psalm 103: 8.



WEEK 1 | FRIDAY

Luke 2: 1-20

Reflection:

In the gospel of Luke, who receives the good news of Christmas first? The shepherds! Matthew and Luke are the only gospels that share the story of Jesus' birth. In Matthew, the wise men are the first to receive the good news, but in Luke it's the shepherds. Luke wants to emphasize that the good news of Jesus' presence in our lives is for everyone. Jesus is here for all and is with all. The shepherds who were probably not the most religiously educated... provide us with the perfect example of what to do after encountering God. First they listen. Second they look for Jesus. Lastly, they share the good news. Not a bad model for us all to follow! What is God saying to us? Where can we look to find Jesus working? How can we further God's work by sharing what is happening? Listen. Look. Share.

It is hard to say who are our modern shepherds, but there is something to be said of finding the gospel in unexpected places. The shepherds carried the good news of Jesus to the people of their day. It wasn't the priests, it wasn't the pharisees, and it wasn't from any expected source. Who is carrying the good news of Jesus now? What places is good news coming from that we would never expect?

Faith Inspiration Friday:

Every Friday of each week in our reading plan, we will share of someone from our life who has inspired, encouraged, and taught us how to live like Jesus. When I read Luke 2:1-20 and when I think about someone who is always sharing the good news, I can't help but think of Bill Morgan. He has no idea I am writing this. He is my across the hall neighbor in the office. Every morning, he walks in and checks on my well being. Many mornings, he will share a book, an article, or a movie that he has recently seen. Some mornings, he will say something like, "this book reminded me of you, and I want you to have it." He is the perfect example of sharing good and important news. It helps stir up good conversation, and I always feel better from having talked with him. If you know Bill, you know he always thinks of others first. He is a great listener, he looks to find Jesus every day, and he shares the good news once he finds it.

Grace,
Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Let's practice the shepherds (and Bill Morgan's) example and share some good news. Today, reflect and look back on where God has moved in your life in amazing ways. Then, find someone to share the story of your good news.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who in our lives has shared the good news with us?
2. When was the last time we shared excitement about our faith or about God?
3. Ask someone about the good news in their life.



2026 READING PLAN

week 2

Welcome to Week 2!

I hope our daily reading plan is giving you space to encounter God more often in your daily walk. We truly believe that more time with God and more time with scripture, will be transformative for us as individuals and us as a church. We want scripture to be become more accessible, and we also want God to be on our minds more often each day. This week we are continuing with the early gospel stories. We get to see young Jesus, and get to know John the Baptist.

Also coming to you this week, is our very own Senior Pastor Keith Thompson! Keith has written devotionals for Tuesday and Friday. From this point forward, you will hear from three different voices each week. Every week you will hear from Natalie and myself, and now also from a different member of the staff. We hope you will enjoy learning about us all as well as hearing how we approach scripture.

May your devotional time be fruitful!

– Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

January 12–16

Mon, Jan 12: Luke 2:21–40 — Jesus Presented in the Temple

Tue, Jan 13: Luke 2:41–52 — Young Jesus in the Temple

Wed, Jan 14: Luke 3:1–22 — John the Baptist & Jesus' Baptism

Thu, Jan 15: Luke 3:23–38 — The Genealogy of Jesus

Fri, Jan 16: Luke 4:1–13 — Jesus' Temptation in the Wilderness



WEEK 2 | MONDAY

Luke 2: 21-40

Weekly Word: CONSOLATION

Every Monday, we will give you a weekly word to focus on. Today's word is consolation, Greek word: παράκλησις (paraklēsis). This word appears in Luke 2:25 referring to Simeon who waits for the consolation of Israel. It can mean comfort, exhortation, or encouragement.

Reflection:

Today's reading is filled with wonder at the immediate awareness by those who were faithful people, knowing who Jesus was to be for the people of Israel. Simeon known for being righteous and devout waited patiently for "consolation of Israel". As we can see from the word of the week that this word can mean comfort, encouragement, or exhortation. Meeting Jesus, even as a child, made him feel that this was the fulfillment of what had been revealed to him. Then we meet Anna, a prophetess, who has a similar experience when Jesus is in front of her. It speaks to the fulfillment of God's word in an incredible way. The other thing this passage shows us are faithful people who are waiting patiently for God to comfort them, to encourage them, to exhort them. The Oxford English dictionary defines exhortation as "an address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something."

What are your hopes in your spiritual life this year? Are you waiting to be comforted? Do you need encouragement to do something that has been on your heart? Are you expecting an emphatic urging to do something or to serve in some way?

— Natalie Moon

Practice:

Luke tells us that Anna prayed night and day. Is there a time of prayer that you can add to your day, both morning and evening? What would that look like? Maybe make it simple and short and pray the Lord's prayer. Or maybe simply ask God to comfort, encourage, or exhort you.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. When was the last time you were filled with wonder?
2. How are you with patience? Is that a fruit of the spirit you need to practice?
3. What are your hopes for your spiritual life this year?



WEEK 2 | TUESDAY

Luke 2: 41-52

Reflection:

“Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house?” — Luke 2:49

This passage drops us into a moment of holy disruption. Mary and Joseph have lost Jesus—every parent’s nightmare—and when they finally find Him, He is exactly where He believes He must be: in His Father’s house. Twelve-year-old Jesus is already living with a deep sense of purpose and identity. His choice doesn’t dismiss His parents but reveals a truth Mary and Joseph are still growing into: Jesus belongs fully to God, and that belonging shapes every step He takes. The temple scene invites us to consider the places where God calls us to “be about” the work we were created for. Sometimes purpose emerges through unexpected tension—moments that redirect us toward what matters most.

I, like many of you, have been through seasons when my schedule was too full, my energy too thin, and my purpose too blurry. One afternoon I walked into our beautiful sanctuary—not because I had time, but because I was in need of a place of refuge. I sat in the quiet, and for the first time in a while, I recognized how far I had drifted from simply being present with God. Something in me whispered a similar truth that Jesus voiced: This is where you belong. It wasn’t that I needed to be in the sanctuary constantly, but that I needed to return to the rhythms that re-centered my life. That moment nudged me back toward grounding, clarity, and a renewed sense of being held by God.

– Keith Thompson

Practice:

Spend 5 minutes today in a quiet place where you feel closest to God. Allow your mind to settle, breathe slowly, and simply rest in the truth that you belong to God.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Where is your “Father’s house”—the place you feel most aligned with God’s presence?
2. What part of your purpose might God be nudging back into focus this week?
3. Where do you need to pause long enough to listen?

WEEK 2 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 3: 1-22

Reflection:

In today's passage we get a glimpse into the heart of John the Baptist's ministry. A fiery speaker, he certainly lived his life passionately and singularly for the purpose God called him to. In verse 7 and 8, Luke tells us, "John said to the crowds coming to be baptized by him, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance." Can you imagine beginning a baptism with these words today? I can't imagine that going over very well. He goes on to instruct those in attendance on how to live into this baptism. If you have two tunics, give one to someone who has none. Don't cheat your neighbor. Share food with those who have none.

John was there to prepare the way. To make our paths straight. One thing I have noticed in my own life is that when my morals and convictions are not aligned with the way that I am living my life or prioritizing my days, my path is ANYTHING but straight. John saw that in the community he lived in, that the spiritual practices did not align with the way that people actually lived their lives, and not only was he unafraid to speak out about this, but he did it in a way that you could not confuse his meaning.

I feel like we respond one of two ways when confronted with our sin. We accept it; we already know what it is that we are doing. We know better than anyone else what our flaws are because we have a front row seat for everything we have ever done or thought. But to have it pointed out by someone else. Wow. Either you appreciate it because you needed the nudging to make a change, or you lean in harder and become angry. Here we see two different reactions. The powerful Herod obviously doesn't appreciate it. Others are drawn toward it. They seek out John and this baptism of repentance.

Wesley Wednesday:

What a coincidence that this passage falls on what we have deemed "Wesley Wednesday".

This summer a group from Canterbury had the opportunity to travel in the footsteps of John and Charles Wesley, including a trip to the New Room in Bristol, England. In the words of David Worthington, the Director of the New Room, "While John Wesley's heart may have been strangely warmed in London, it was set afire in Bristol." At the time of John Wesley, Bristol was a prosperous and growing port city, notable for its involvement in the slave trade and its coal mining industry. In one dramatic 1788 scene Wesley preached against slavery in Bristol's slave trade capital, causing angry traders to literally break apart church pews and attack each other during the service. According to Adam Hamilton, this wasn't just moral posturing – it was dangerous activism in the heart of England's slavery industry. It was here that Wesley preached to thousands of coal miners who couldn't afford church pew taxes, watching tears cut through the coal dust on their faces. This moment of radical inclusion for society's outcasts became the template for Methodist social ministry worldwide.

As we consider the boldness of John Wesley, I want to go back to John the Baptist's directive:
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.

Repentance means to turn and go a different direction.
– Natalie Moon

Practice:

For our practice today, I want to invite you to listen to this song and ask God to ignite that heartwarming fire within your heart.

(Copy and paste this URL into your browser.)

<https://open.spotify.com/track/4WMhwQqqa6BkhWshgz9UKf>

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What comes to mind in your own life that you feel God is calling you to turn from?
2. What fruit would that produce in your life?
3. Social justice is at the heart of not only the United Methodist Church but the church as a whole. Spend some time reflecting on what God is calling you personally to do for others. What "sets you on fire"?



WEEK 2 | THURSDAY

Luke 3: 23-38

Reflection:

I know I know... a reading on Jesus' genealogy may appear boring... but there are some really great parts to this passage. Let's highlight several big Old Testament names from Jesus' family tree:

1. David – shepherd turned king, defeated Goliath, and turned Israel into a kingdom
2. Boaz – Cared for and married Ruth – (Read the book of Ruth for more!)
3. Judah – 4th son of Jacob and Leah, his name means praise, and he is born after his mother Leah realizes that God is with her even at her lowest point
4. Abraham – the main figure in Genesis. The first to receive God's messianic promise, and the Father of all of Israel
5. Adam – the first person on earth, and father of all people everywhere

There are some really great names in here that Jesus could be proud of! However, every single one of these people also had major flaws and made many mistakes. Of those 5 names, some of them were liars, some were murderers, and some seemed completely lost. Despite their faults, God was very present in their lives, and from them all came Jesus. For me, it is fun to see that Jesus came from a complicated past. No one's family is perfect, but God shows up and does some of God's best work through complicated people.

Through the genealogy I am convinced of two things:

- 1) We all have complicated and at times difficult families
- 2) God shows up and does good work anyway

One last point...

The gospel of Matthew also includes a genealogy (Matt. Chapter 1). In Matthew's version, the genealogy goes back to Abraham whereas Luke's version goes all the way back to Adam. Matthew was written for a Jewish audience, and Luke was written for a Gentile audience. Matthew wants to highlight that Jesus comes from the father of the Jewish faith. Luke wants to highlight that Jesus comes from Adam the father of all of humanity. Jesus is for everyone.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

REFRESH – Re-read today's passage with a physical picture of your family in your hand. Think about and reflect on all the ways God has shown up in our life through our family. If you want to go further, draw your family tree or write down names as far back as you can remember. Reflect on the ways God has worked through your family.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Ask someone about their family of origin.
2. Who in your family impacted you the most in a positive and loving way. How did they live in a way that you want to repeat?

WEEK 2 | FRIDAY

Luke 4: 1-13

Reflection:

“Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit... was led by the Spirit in the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.” — Luke 4:1-2

The wilderness is not a punishment; it is often preparation. Jesus is led there (some translations say “driven there”) by the Spirit, which means the wilderness is not the absence of God but the environment in which Jesus’ identity is clarified and His mission strengthened. Each temptation targets a different version of false identity: performance (“Turn stones into bread”), power (“Take authority over all this”), and protection (“Throw yourself down”). Jesus resists not by extraordinary effort but by remembering what is eternally true. The wilderness strips away illusions so only what is real remains. This passage reminds us that temptation is rarely about the thing itself—it’s about forgetting who we are and whose we are.

I once went through a stretch where I kept trying to prove my worth through productivity. Every unchecked item on my to-do list felt like failure, and every success felt like borrowed oxygen. Eventually, the pressure became its own wilderness—dry, exhausting, lonely. In that space, God gently reminded me that my/our identity does not come from accomplishments but from belonging. Like Jesus, I had to reclaim the truth God has spoken over my life— God’s truth is stronger than fear, insecurity, or performance anxiety. The wilderness didn’t disappear overnight, but the lies started losing their grip. Sometimes God leads us into quiet, uncomfortable places not to expose our weakness but to anchor our identity more deeply in grace.

– Keith Thompson

Practice:

Write down one false identity you tend to believe (e.g., “I’m only valuable when I’m productive”). Then write a scripture or simple truth that counters it. Read it three times today.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What “wilderness” are you navigating right now?
2. Which of the temptations—performance, power, or protection—most speaks to your struggles?
3. What truth do you need to reclaim to remember who you are in Christ?



2026 READING PLAN

week 3

Welcome to Week 3!

Thank you for joining us in our reading plan through the gospel of Luke. It is heart warming to hear people in our church halls talking about everything they are reading and experiencing together.

Our readings this week are taking us into the beginning days of Jesus' ministry. This week we get to see the calling of the first disciples, the early patterns of who accepted Jesus and who rejected Jesus, and then some early teachings. It can be hard to read the beginning without thinking about the end. We know where things will eventually go and that is important for understanding Jesus. However, it is also a fun exercise to not think about the cross and resurrection in these early days. Read these chapters as if we are also the people experiencing Jesus for the first time. Imagine how it must feel to be a regular person in the congregation as Jesus preaches, imagine how it would feel to be a bystander as Jesus starts picking fishermen as disciples instead of scribes, or imagine how it must feel to be a skeptic while Jesus starts doing miracles. The beautiful thing about scripture is that it continually speaks new life even on familiar stories. I pray it speaks to you this week.

Coming up this week, we will hear from Natalie, myself, and we will also hear from Tori! Don't skip to the end... but her Friday devotional is really great.

Thank for for participating in this spiritual practice. I pray it is fruitful for you and grows your relationship with God!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

January 19-23

Mon, Jan 19: Luke 4:14–30 — Jesus Rejected at Nazareth

Tue, Jan 20: Luke 4:31–44 — Jesus Heals Many

Wed, Jan 21: Luke 5:1–11 — Calling the First Disciples

Thu, Jan 22: Luke 5:12–32 — Healing a Leper & Calling Levi

Fri, Jan 23: Luke 5:33–39 — A Question About Fasting



WEEK 3 | MONDAY

Luke 4: 14-30

Weekly Word: Accept/Welcome

Each Monday we want to highlight a word to give us focus for the week. This week I am looking at verse 24 where Jesus said, “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.” Some other translations say “accepted.”

Accept/welcome – is our weekly word.

Let this word guide you to be open to the Holy Spirit’s work of acceptance and welcoming all week long.

Reflection:

Wow... tough time for Jesus! His growing fame and reputation for miracles has followed him into Nazareth, his hometown. This is the first sermon recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke, and it is a pokey one. It strikes me as funny that no one in the crowd has a problem with Jesus calling himself the messiah. Everyone seems perfectly ok with him claiming to represent the prophecy from Isaiah. The thing that gets the crowd angry comes from verses v23-27. What is it in these words that angers the crowd so much? In the way I read it, the people of Nazareth want Jesus to perform miracles for them just as he did in other towns. In response to their requests, Jesus references two Old Testament stories where God sent Elijah and Elisha to cities outside of Israel, Sidon and Syria. Jesus in his hometown chooses not to show them preferential treatment with miracles, but more or less says that his miracles are for the outsiders. The crowd does not take kindly to this news. They go so far as to become hostile towards Jesus so much so they want to throw him off a cliff! Crazy, this whole passage takes place in a Synagogue. The crowd is the church community of Nazareth. Here inside church walls, the crowd becomes angry with Jesus and does not accept him. It scares me to think of the people in our own church walls who we are not accepting. What does it mean to welcome and accept people outside of our normal groups? I have heard it said before that, “the opposite of hostility is hospitality.” What would it look like if Canterbury was dedicated to the work of hospitality?

— Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Let’s practice some hospitality this week:

Part 1) Invite someone outside of your normal circles to lunch, coffee, to your home, or any invitation to time and conversation.

Part 2) Next time you come to church, seek out someone you do not know and practice welcoming/accepting them

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. If we were in the crowd at Nazareth, do we think we would’ve welcomed and accepted Jesus’ words?
2. Who are we failing to welcome in church, in our offices, or in our neighborhoods?
3. What is a time someone welcomed and accepted you? How did it change you?



WEEK 3 | TUESDAY

Luke 4: 31-44

Reflection:

Are there any people in our lives that we have written off? People who we would never dream that would or even could speak the truth about who Jesus is? In the verses before today's reading, Jesus has just been run out of Nazareth, his home town. He had been teaching about preaching good news to the poor, releasing prisoners, and rescuing the oppressed. He told them that God often works through those we least expect and even don't like. And, they didn't like what Jesus had to say.

He moved on to Capernaum and taught all of the good church going people on the Sabbath. They liked his preaching style but still couldn't quite grasp who he was or what exactly he was about. It took someone no one would expect, much less listen to, to speak the truth about Jesus's power and identity. Jesus's reputation began to precede him as more and more people brought relatives and friends who needed to be restored to life. Yet, time and again, it was the ones no one expected who shouted the truth, and time and again, Jesus silenced them. We can't help but ask why? Why would Jesus not want everyone to hear the Good News about who he was and what he came to do?

There comes a time in each of our lives when we have to be able to say for ourselves what Jesus came to do – to preach good news to the poor, release prisoners, and rescue the oppressed – and speak the truth of who Jesus is – God's Holy son, the Christ – even if our voice shakes. I hope we can all tune our ears to the voices of those we least expect when we need a reminder.

– Tori Hastings

Practice:

To further yesterday's practice of welcoming, call or text someone on your mind. Let them know they are being thought of and prayed for this morning.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who is Jesus showing up to in our community?
What would they have to teach us about how God moves?
2. How can we join alongside Jesus' work to find the least and the lost?
3. When did you feel lost? Who showed up for you?



WEEK 3 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 5: 1-11

Reflection:

I love this story for many reasons. Firstly, I love it because this is how discipleship with Jesus began. He met Simon (Peter), James, and John doing their everyday job (fishing), on a normal maybe even disappointing day. Before the day was over, a little time with Jesus was enough to transform their entire lives.

Secondly, I love this story because of what it tells us about discipleship. Thanks to Jesus, Simon (Peter), James, and John went from having an unproductive day into having the best day of their entire fishing career. With a catch this big, they could take time off, they could use the money to improve their livelihoods, they could even dream up a new and better career for themselves. But instead, they give it all up to follow Jesus. They had their biggest day of fishing, and they didn't get to enjoy any of it. They traded it all to walk with Jesus.

It makes me wonder... if Jesus had given me the most lucrative day of my career (think lottery winning type day), would I also be willing to leave it all immediately after gaining it? Would I, like the disciples, be able to see the bigger picture that life with Jesus is more compelling than a good day of business?

Wesley Wednesday:

John Wesley had a lot to say about discipleship and how it requires everything. Discipleship cannot just be passive obedience, but it requires sacrifice and the willingness to carry one's cross. Below is a prayer he prayed to center himself on this work.

John Wesley's Prayer:

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee, exalted for thee or brought low for thee.

Let me be full, let me be empty. Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O gracious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.

And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.

Amen.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

If you are ready to be like the disciples and like John Wesley, pray the prayer above. Take note of the places God takes you.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does following Jesus require us to give up?
2. If Jesus asked us to walk away from winning the lottery, would we be willing to do it?
3. Who is an example in your life of someone who lives like these disciples did?

WEEK 3 | THURSDAY

Luke 5: 12-32

Reflection:

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repent.” What a statement! I wanted to start our devotional thought off today with this response from Jesus to the religious leaders who criticized the company he kept.

In today’s passage, we experience three different very dramatic scenes: Two people desperate to be healed and one man willing to follow. These three people who are part of vastly different communities; a man who probably experienced a lot of solitude, a man who apparently was beloved enough by his friends to lower him through a roof at the chance to be healed, and a person who was deeply involved with the wrong sorts of people. The quality that unifies all of these people in my mind is trust. They seemed to trust that Jesus can work miracles and that being in his presence would transform them.

I wonder if we can find ourselves and our own relationship with Jesus in these stories. Maybe you haven’t experienced a miracle as dramatic as the ones that we read about today, but if you are reading these passages with us this year, you have certainly experienced the love and forgiveness of Jesus in some way. I imagine that experience has made you trust Him. Back to our opening statement from Jesus to the religious leaders, we have recognized our own imperfections and surrendered them to Him.

– Natalie Moon

For the meditation song, Trust in God, copy and paste this URL into your browser:
<https://open.spotify.com/track/45h3M5mnqeoCRuNUEKxuNO?si=0fe3714de37343a5>

Practice:

REFRESH – I want to invite you to go someplace that reminds you of the trust that you have in God. For me, it will be the youth center at Riverchase UMC. It was the first place my husband and I worked after college and we got to see the youth group grow from about 20 students to several hundred. We didn’t know many people in Birmingham when we moved here and saw God work in our own lives in ways that has made my trust in Him grow. At the time, moving here felt like a step of faith. Is there a place that reminds you a step of faith that you took?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Where did your trust in God begin?
2. Was there a moment in particular or did it grow over time?
3. What is one step of faith that you can take this week to help your trust grow?
4. Is there some act of mercy you have been led towards?
5. Is there a volunteer position that speaks to you?

WEEK 3 | FRIDAY

Luke 5: 33-39

Reflection:

My husband once did a 72 hour fast to reset his dopamine levels and immune system. In our ever increasing health conscious world, we hear medical professionals and health geeks talk about the benefits of all different kinds of fasts – intermittent, gut-reset, fat burning. Name the health goal, and there's a suggested fast for optimal results.

I have never been very good at fasting despite having health my own health goals. When I get hungry, I get grumpy. That's never good for anyone!

Fasting was a spiritual practice long before it was a health hack.

The most prominent example of fasting in the Old Testament is outlined in Leviticus when the Israelites are commanded by God to fast on the Day of Atonement as a day of communal repentance and humility. Many Jewish people still communally observe this fast today. Moses fasted from food and water while he was meeting with God on Mt. Sinai receiving God's instruction for leading God's people. Hannah sought God in prayer and fasting when she was heartbroken and desperate for a child before the birth of Samuel. Faced with multiple warnings from Jonah, the Ninevites prayed and fasted as an act of repentence for the harm and destruction they had inflicted on so many. They fasted for various reasons but all desired to be closer to God.

Fasting, it seems, is a way for us to grow closer to the God we cannot see on a deeper level than we might otherwise be able to. It is a thin place – a way of bridging physical and spiritual realities. It's no wonder that Jesus was taken aback by the peoples' comment about Jesus' disciples not fasting and always eating and drinking. The very God of the universe was walking among them bringing the spiritual realities of God to the physical earth.

So, Jesus' disciples celebrated accordingly! They ate, drank, and reveled in the fullness of heaven coming to earth! It, too, was a thing space.

The healthiest people I know are well attuned with balance. There are times when fasting is what provides our bodies and our souls with what it most needs – a physical reset, an intentional focus on God, a removal of distraction. And, there are times when celebrating provides what our bodies and our souls most need – a reveling in the moments when heaven meets earth, however fleeting. I hope we can seek out thin spaces together.

– Tori Hastings

Practice:

Fasting can come in many shapes and forms. Some people fast from food, while others fast from tech, from spending, or even talking. Choose something to fast either for a day, a weekend, or a full week. Like our biblical examples, use fasts to grow closer to God.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

Have you ever fasted as a spiritual practice?

What did you gain from it?

And if not, why not?



2026 READING PLAN

week 4

Welcome to Week 4!

Almost a month into the reading plan, a month with the Gospel of Luke, and a month with the early days of Jesus' life and ministry! Thank you for continuing on with our reading and spending time with God.

Coming up this week is Luke's Sermon on the Plain. A different telling of Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount. In Matthew's gospel, Jesus delivered his famous Sermon on the Mount on, you guessed it, a mountainside. He gives this sermon on a mountain as a callback to when the 10 Commandments were received on a mountain. Matthew is showing his audience that Jesus isn't just a teacher, but he is also the author of the law and is able to interpret it for all of us. Luke has a difference emphasis. Instead of going up to teach, like he does in Matthew, in the gospel of Luke Jesus comes down to the level plain. It is a symbol that the law/the good news is for everyone.

One more big thing to note for this week, Luke 6:16 lists the names of the 12 disciples. It ends by saying, "Judas Iscariot who became a traitor." Luke doesn't leave us in suspense. He spoils the story early and names Judas as a traitor the moment he is introduced. Why does he do this? For the next 18 or so chapters, every time we read about Jesus' ministry, we now know Jesus is traveling with his eventual betrayer. Jesus eats his meals with Judas, he lets Judas see the miracles, and he lets Judas share in all the highlights and stories. It is a full display of enemy love... and he does it for years. Just like the sermon on the plains, Jesus welcomes and loves all no matter what.

Thank for for participating in this spiritual practice. I pray it is fruitful for you and grows your relationship with God!

A look at the Week Ahead: This week we are featuring Eleanor Christensen! We pray you enjoy the readings knowing you are loved no matter what.

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

January 26-30

Mon, Jan 26: Luke 6:1-16 — Lord of the Sabbath & Choosing the Twelve

Tue, Jan 27: Luke 6:17-36 — The Sermon on the Plain (Part 1)

Wed, Jan 28: Luke 6:37-49 — The Sermon on the Plain (Part 2)

Thu, Jan 29: Luke 7:1-17 — Jesus Heals the Centurion's Servant & Raises a Widow's Son

Fri, Jan 30: Luke 7:18-35 — John's Question & Jesus' Response



WEEK 3 | MONDAY

Luke 4: 14-30

Weekly Word: Accept/Welcome

Each Monday we want to highlight a word to give us focus for the week. This week I am looking at verse 24 where Jesus said, “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.” Some other translations say “accepted.”

Accept/welcome – is our weekly word.

Let this word guide you to be open to the Holy Spirit’s work of acceptance and welcoming all week long.

Reflection:

Wow... tough time for Jesus! His growing fame and reputation for miracles has followed him into Nazareth, his hometown. This is the first sermon recorded for us in the Gospel of Luke, and it is a pokey one. It strikes me as funny that no one in the crowd has a problem with Jesus calling himself the messiah. Everyone seems perfectly ok with him claiming to represent the prophecy from Isaiah. The thing that gets the crowd angry comes from verses v23-27. What is it in these words that angers the crowd so much? In the way I read it, the people of Nazareth want Jesus to perform miracles for them just as he did in other towns. In response to their requests, Jesus references two Old Testament stories where God sent Elijah and Elisha to cities outside of Israel, Sidon and Syria. Jesus in his hometown chooses not to show them preferential treatment with miracles, but more or less says that his miracles are for the outsiders. The crowd does not take kindly to this news. They go so far as to become hostile towards Jesus so much so they want to throw him off a cliff! Crazy, this whole passage takes place in a Synagogue. The crowd is the church community of Nazareth. Here inside church walls, the crowd becomes angry with Jesus and does not accept him. It scares me to think of the people in our own church walls who we are not accepting. What does it mean to welcome and accept people outside of our normal groups? I have heard it said before that, “the opposite of hostility is hospitality.” What would it look like if Canterbury was dedicated to the work of hospitality?

— Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Let’s practice some hospitality this week:

Part 1) Invite someone outside of your normal circles to lunch, coffee, to your home, or any invitation to time and conversation.

Part 2) Next time you come to church, seek out someone you do not know and practice welcoming/accepting them

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. If we were in the crowd at Nazareth, do we think we would’ve welcomed and accepted Jesus’ words?
2. Who are we failing to welcome in church, in our offices, or in our neighborhoods?
3. What is a time someone welcomed and accepted you? How did it change you?



WEEK 3 | TUESDAY

Luke 4: 31-44

Reflection:

Are there any people in our lives that we have written off? People who we would never dream that would or even could speak the truth about who Jesus is? In the verses before today's reading, Jesus has just been run out of Nazareth, his home town. He had been teaching about preaching good news to the poor, releasing prisoners, and rescuing the oppressed. He told them that God often works through those we least expect and even don't like. And, they didn't like what Jesus had to say.

He moved on to Capernaum and taught all of the good church going people on the Sabbath. They liked his preaching style but still couldn't quite grasp who he was or what exactly he was about. It took someone no one would expect, much less listen to, to speak the truth about Jesus's power and identity. Jesus's reputation began to precede him as more and more people brought relatives and friends who needed to be restored to life. Yet, time and again, it was the ones no one expected who shouted the truth, and time and again, Jesus silenced them. We can't help but ask why? Why would Jesus not want everyone to hear the Good News about who he was and what he came to do?

There comes a time in each of our lives when we have to be able to say for ourselves what Jesus came to do – to preach good news to the poor, release prisoners, and rescue the oppressed – and speak the truth of who Jesus is – God's Holy son, the Christ – even if our voice shakes. I hope we can all tune our ears to the voices of those we least expect when we need a reminder.

– Tori Hastings

Practice:

To further yesterday's practice of welcoming, call or text someone on your mind. Let them know they are being thought of and prayed for this morning.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who is Jesus showing up to in our community?
What would they have to teach us about how God moves?
2. How can we join alongside Jesus' work to find the least and the lost?
3. When did you feel lost? Who showed up for you?



WEEK 3 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 5: 1-11

Reflection:

I love this story for many reasons. Firstly, I love it because this is how discipleship with Jesus began. He met Simon (Peter), James, and John doing their everyday job (fishing), on a normal maybe even disappointing day. Before the day was over, a little time with Jesus was enough to transform their entire lives.

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WEEK 3 | THURSDAY

Luke 5: 12-32

Reflection:

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WEEK 3 | FRIDAY

Luke 5: 33-39

Reflection:

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The most prominent example of fasting in the Old Testament is outlined in Leviticus when the Israelites are commanded by God to fast on the Day of Atonement as a day of communal repentance and humility. Many Jewish people still communally observe this fast today. Moses fasted from food and water while he was meeting with God on Mt. Sinai receiving God's instruction for leading God's people. Hannah sought God in prayer and fasting when she was heartbroken and desperate for a child before the birth of Samuel. Faced with multiple warnings from Jonah, the Ninevites prayed and fasted as an act of repentence for the harm and destruction they had inflicted on so many. They fasted for various reasons but all desired to be closer to God.

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What did you gain from it?

And if not, why not?



2026 READING PLAN

week 5

Welcome to Week 5!

New month! We have now made it to a new form of Jesus' teachings... we will start having parables! Parables are without a doubt my favorite part of the gospels (except John because he didn't include any of those). It is so interesting that Jesus, who had all the answers, would often teach through parables. There are days in my life that the meaning in a parable feels straightforward, then there are days in my life where a parable can make me second guess everything. Parables can be life giving, and they can also be mysterious. Straight answers from Jesus are hard to come by, and it seems as if Jesus enjoys making us search for the answer.

As you prepare for the readings this week, be willing to take time with these early parables and have fun with them. Often in parables, there is a farmer or manager figure who we assume to be God. There are often crowds who we assume to be disciples. There is often a lesson and we assume it's for the pharisees. However, I want to invite you to play with those assumptions. Play with the idea that God, the disciples, the crowds, the pharisees, could all be different characters. With this practice, I have found parables take on new life and provide new truths. I pray the same happens for you this week!

A look at the Week Ahead: This week we are featuring our incredible Director of Youth Ministry, Rev. Gann Waters-Wright! If you know Gann at all, you know he is one of the most gifted thinkers and speakers. I guarantee you will enjoy his thoughtful reflections!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

February 2-6

Mon, Feb 2: Luke 7: 36-50 — The Sinful Woman Forgiven

Tue, Feb 3: Luke 8: 1-15 — The Parable of the Sower

Wed, Feb 4: Luke 8: 16-39 — A Lamp, a Storm, and a Demon Legion

Thu, Feb 5: Luke 8: 40-56 — Jairus' Daughter and the Bleeding Woman

Fri, Feb 6: Luke 9: 1-17 — Mission of the Twelve and Feeding the 5,000

WEEK 5 | MONDAY

Luke 7: 36-50

Weekly Word: Sinner

Each Monday we want to highlight a word to give us focus for the week. This week I am looking at verse 24 where Jesus said, “no prophet is welcome in his hometown.” Some other translations say “accepted.”

Sinner... I am so sorry for being a downer on a Monday morning (on Groundhog Day no less!), but I hope we can turn this into some good and uplifting news (especially if the groundhog gives us 6 more weeks of winter...).

Reflection:

This is one of the more awkward stories in scripture. A Pharisee, who is presumably well off and has good social standing, has invited Jesus to dinner. At some point, the woman in our story sneaks in and gets a little too cozy with Jesus... She washes Jesus' feet with ointment, her hair, and her tears. She then goes on to start kissing his feet. I can only imagine the discomfort of everyone at the dinner table as they watch what is happening. The only thing we know about this woman is that she is a sinner. That's it. We don't get a physical description. We don't get any back story for how she earned this label. We don't even get her name. We only know one thing about her... that she is a sinner. If you are like me, when I hear the word sinner, it comes with a lot of connotations. I imagine someone who does everything the Bible tells Christians to avoid. I imagine something scandalous. I imagine someone I wouldn't want to be associated with. The gospel of Luke uses the word “sinner” close to 20 times. This word/title/label isn't used for someone being scandalous or someone trapped in the wrong way of living. The title of sinner is given to the outcasts. It is given to the people not in good social standing. It is given to those who are alone and cut off from community.

Jesus does something far more scandalous than the woman, he allows this outcast to be with him. He doesn't stop her from washing and kissing his feet. He doesn't condemn whatever actions earned her the title of sinner. He doesn't say a single thing about her past. He doesn't even try to change her lifestyle. Instead, in front of everyone gathered, he welcomes her in and accepts her attention. I can only imagine that was the very thing an outcast needed the most.

If you have ever attended our New Traditions service (or the Sanctuary on communion Sundays), you may have noticed that we offer the prayer of confession before we pass the peace. It is because of passages like our story today. Jesus welcomes, Jesus forgives, and Jesus tells us to go in peace (v.50). We confess because we have all fallen short of perfect love. However, forgiveness is offered freely and immediately. Once we have been forgiven and received the peace Jesus offers, we are now able to go and share that very peace with others. If you have ever felt like a “sinner” or like an outcast, I pray you trust the truth of this story. Jesus doesn't condemn sinners, but does something far crazier. He welcomes us in, he forgives, he offers us peace, and he sends us to offer that peace to others.

Go in peace,
Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Let's practice some hospitality this week:

Part 1) Invite someone outside of your normal circles to lunch, coffee, to your home, or any invitation to time and conversation.
Part 2) Next time you come to church, seek out someone you do not know and practice welcoming/accepting them

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. If we were in the crowd at Nazareth, do we think we would've welcomed and accepted Jesus' words?
2. Who are we failing to welcome in church, in our offices, or in our neighborhoods?
3. What is a time someone welcomed and accepted you? How did it change you?



WEEK 5 | TUESDAY

Luke 8: 1-15

Reflection:

The stories Jesus tells can be both frustrating and eye-opening. Sometimes I wish Jesus had just told the disciples exactly what to do, think, and believe. That would've made things a lot clearer, right? But instead, Jesus tells stories—stories that invite us to wrestle, reflect, and grow in faith. This parable gives us a powerful picture of who God is and what God is like.

If you've been around church for a while, you probably know the parable of the sower. It's a classic Sunday-school favorite. Before Jesus tells this story, Luke intentionally points out the people following him—men and women with real histories, real struggles, and real messes. Mary Magdalene, for example, had been healed of seven demons (that's a whole other devo). Luke makes it clear: these disciples don't have it all together.

This parable is often taught as if we are the seeds—so we should make sure we're planted in good soil. That's one way to read it. Another way is to see ourselves as the soil itself: sometimes rocky, sometimes thorny, sometimes good. God is the farmer. No matter our season, our past, or our current state, God continues to scatter seeds of grace, hoping something will take root. God's love is extravagant like that—given freely, even when conditions aren't perfect.

That reading fits the disciples we see in Luke's gospel. They are far from perfect. Some are rocky soil, some thorny soil, and maybe a few are good soil in that moment. Yet all of them are invited to follow Jesus. And thank God for that.

– Gann Waters-Wright

Practice:

If you can, spend a few minutes outside. Look at the soil around you. Does it seem like something could grow there? Reflect on what it means that God plants seeds in every kind of soil.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Which type of soil do you most resonate with right now, and why?
2. What might grow if you became more aware of God's grace and love for you?
3. Have you ever labeled others as "bad soil"? How does this parable challenge that perspective?



WEEK 5 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 8: 16-39

Reflection:

Today we get to meet an important man. We get to meet the first missionary to the Gentiles.

Verses 26-39 are difficult. Throughout my life, I have heard a lot of different interpretations for the man known as Legion. I feel as if many teachers and preachers have attempted to interpret and modernize what could possibly be going on with this man, the demons, and also the pigs. Perhaps you have heard how even the demons recognize Jesus. Instead of going down those roads, I want to offer a different approach.

Verse 26 tells us Jesus and the disciples went to the “country of the Gerasenes.” In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus only leaves Jewish lands 3 times. This is his first trip to a gentile (or non-jewish) area, and it's a quick trip. In his short time, he meets Legion, heals him of his demons, and restores him to his community. The man, formally known as Legion, begs to follow Jesus. Jesus tells him no. He doesn't let him join the disciples. Instead, he says, “return home and declare how much God has done for you.” Now the Bible is clever here. It ends by saying the man, “went away proclaiming what Jesus had done for him.” It does two things. First, it reinforces to us readers that Jesus is God. Second, Jesus just created the first missionary/evangelist to the Gentiles. Jesus sends this man to gentile lands to spread the good news. Later on in the Book of Acts, when the first Church was beginning to grow, the disciples will find many have already heard of Jesus. I wonder how far this man carried his message.

Wesley Wednesday:

In all United Methodist churches, we ask all new members to vow to be faithful with their: prayers, presence, gifts, service, and witness. The word “witness” wasn't added until 2008. The UMC added this newest vow because Jesus is clear that we have an obligation and responsibility to share the Good News. However, we as Methodists, don't witness quite the same way as our more evangelical friends do. Our witness is not solely based on eternal destinations. Instead, our witness is about the transformation offered through Jesus. Our witness is transformation. Our witness is that no situation is too big to be transformed. We are never left in the worst of times because we have a God who transforms and redeems the bad and turns it good. Early Methodism caught fire because this was our message. God is active. God is in the business of transformation. And our job? Tell the story of how God has been actively working on us.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Reflect on a time God stepped into your life and offered some good news or transformed a bad situation. Share that story with someone today.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Why do you think Jesus didn't let Legion join the disciples?
2. When have you witnessed God's saving grace?
3. What has/does transformation look like in your life?

WEEK 5 | THURSDAY

Luke 8: 40-56

Reflection:

As we move on from the dramatic display of power in yesterday's reading, we get to see the gentleness and compassion of Jesus. We first meet Jairus, a distressed father desperately looking for a miracle for his little girl. On the way to visit this little girl, a woman reached out and touched him, not even his physical body, but the cloak that he was wearing. Jesus, knowing that something had happened, kept asking about it only to receive a bewildered response from Peter. Faith overcame fear for this woman as she revealed that she was the one who had reached out, and we get to see Jesus speak to her in a gentle way that does not appear anywhere else in his recorded words, referring to her as daughter. As this was happening, Jairus gets the information that confirms the worst, his daughter was no longer with them. Again, Jesus responds with compassion and gentleness to Jairus, comforting him that he will continue to walk with him and check on his daughter.

How many times in our life are we interrupted on the way to do something that we intended to do? Does it seem as if interruptions always come at the worst possible time? I think this passage resonated with me because to me, the urgent situation here is the little girl, but Jesus stops gently and compassionately and addresses this woman as well. Our word of the week is touched, or in my favorite translation, fasten to. The faith of Jairus and this woman caused them to fasten to Jesus, and not only experience a miracle, but to experience his compassion and love. Both of these people had enough faith to reach out to Jesus, even though they were afraid; the woman trembling at Jesus's feet, and Jairus even being told to not be afraid.

– Natalie Moon

For the meditation song, Close by Hillsong Young and Free, copy and paste this URL into your browser:

<https://open.spotify.com/track/0yuur9JgFOy7f0E4nAffS8>

Practice:

For today's practice, if you are able, go someplace noisy. Someplace where there are a lot of people, a lot of things happening. Ask God to reveal the ways that you can cling to Him in the midst of the busyness of life, letting go of the noise and focusing on Him.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Have you ever been interrupted while doing something important by something that turned out to be just as important in your life?
2. What does it tell us about Jesus that he responds with compassion to interruptions? What does it tell us about our lives and our faith?
3. Daughter is a term of endearment in this passage. Have you ever felt that compassion from God?
4. What does it feel like to fasten to Jesus when your life gets crazy?



WEEK 5 | FRIDAY

Luke 9: 1–17

Reflection:

The through line in Luke 9:1–17 is simple: you already have everything you need. Jesus gives the disciples his authority and then sends them out with some pretty surprising instructions:

“Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town.” In other words: You’ve been given what you need. Go.

This isn’t an easy or comfortable assignment. If Jesus had said this to me, I would’ve had several follow-up questions. There’s a real sense of urgency here. We tend to think we need everything lined up, fully planned, and backed up with a solid Plan B. Jesus seems to think otherwise.

We see this again in the story of the feeding of the 5,000. Jesus tells the disciples to feed the crowd, and their first response is about logistics—which honestly feels reasonable. But somehow, in the mystery of God, they already have what they need to do what Jesus asks. Not everything they want. Not a perfect plan. Just enough.

How often do I know what God is asking me to do, but delay because I think I need more time, more clarity, or a better plan? Or I tell myself, I’ll get to that when life slows down—as if that’s ever actually going to happen.

Maybe even worse, sometimes I don’t act because I believe I’m lacking in some fundamental way. It’s easy to think we don’t have what it takes to do what God calls us to do. I imagine the disciples felt that way too. What they were asked to do was daunting. But we often underestimate ourselves—and forget that God is with us.

Maybe what we need most is the same reminder Jesus gives the disciples:
You already have everything you need.

– Gann Waters-Wright

Practice:

Make a list of the reasons or excuses you’ve used for not doing something you feel God has called you to do. At the end of that list, write down the first step you would take if you truly believed you already had everything you needed—trusting that God will show up along the way.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What tends to stop you more: not having a plan, or doubting yourself?
2. What do you think the disciples learned by being told to “take nothing for the journey”?
3. What would change in your life if you genuinely believed you already had all you need?



2026 READING PLAN

week 6

Welcome to Week 6!

There's a lot of practical teaching coming your way this week! We'll dive into the Lord's Prayer, the parable of the Good Samaritan, and Jesus sending out the seventy-two. It's deeply practical, and by no means easy, but it's the kind of teaching that has the power to shape how we live.

Thank you for journeying this far into the reading plan. I'd genuinely love to hear how it's going for you. Are you learning something new about Jesus? Is anything showing up differently in your daily life? How are the questions and practices landing for you? If you'd like to share, feel free to email me at matthew.montgomery@canterburyumc.org.

Also coming up this week, we're joined by Annie Skinner! Be sure to catch her Tuesday and Friday devotionals as she guides us in reflections on humility and prayer. Below is a preview of the week ahead.

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the week ahead:

February 9-13

Mon, Feb 9: Luke 9: 18-36 — Peter's Confession and the Transfiguration

Tue, Feb 10: Luke 9: 37-62 — Jesus Predicts His Death and Calls to Follow

Wed, Feb 11: Luke 10: 1-24 — Sending the Seventy-Two

Thu, Feb 12: Luke 10: 25-42 — The Good Samaritan and Mary and Martha

Fri, Feb 13: Luke 11: 1-28 — Teach Us to Pray

WEEK 6 | MONDAY

Luke 9: 18-36

Weekly Word: Fully Awake

Word of the Week – It's more of a phrase this week: Fully Awake διαγρηγορήσαντες δὲ (diagrēgorēsantes de): but having fully woken/awakened. It occurs in Luke 9:32.

Reflection:

Peter is one of my favorite people in the New Testament. To me, he seems like the type of person who would say anything that came to mind and maybe the things that others were afraid to say out loud. In our passage today, Peter declares that Jesus is The Christ of God, the predicted Deliverer who had been awaited for centuries. In the days following this confession, Peter, John, and James experienced a miracle, what our text names as the transfiguration. The transfiguration is not a change into something else, but a revelation of the true, hidden nature of Jesus, the union of full divinity and full humanity. The experience is not for staying on the mountain but for descending to face the realities of a broken world. We, through the eyes of these three disciples, get a glimpse behind the veil to see the glory of Christ. Can you imagine how they felt? Peter declares something that maybe was considered shocking at the time, and maybe something that all of the other disciples were thinking, and had it confirmed a week later.

My youth minister, Roy McVeigh, called this passage of a "mountain top experience". The closest thing we could compare to this was our yearly youth group trip to Deep Creek, North Carolina. All of the high schoolers from our church would go and camp in tents in the mountains for a whole week. Deep Creek was famous for its tubing, so we would rent tubes for the week that not only would be our entertainment during the day, but our chairs for worship at night under the stars. Somehow getting out of town, enjoying of God's beautiful creation, and worshiping together always gave me such clarity to start each school year. I had the chance to experience the divinity of Christ through worship with my friends and set my goals and hopes for the new school year.

Maybe that's what the gift of a mountain top experience gives us; clarity.

That's where our word (or phrase) of the week comes in.

Natalie Moon

Practice:

Have you ever had a "mountain top experience?" What clarity are you looking for in your relationship with God? Think back about a time when you felt like you had clarity. What can you do this week to revisit that time? How do you answer the question that Jesus asks his disciples, "Who do you say I am?" When we honestly answer that question, what clarity does that give you?

As you consider these questions, I want to invite you to listen to one of my new favorite songs, The Whole Thing by Ellie Holcomb.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What do we need to fully wake up to in our spiritual lives?
2. Is there something that we can see a little more clearly?



WEEK 6 | TUESDAY

Luke 9: 37-62

Reflection:

After the mountaintop experience, Jesus and the disciples return to a world full of confusion, unmet expectations, and hard lessons. When Jesus says, “Let the dead bury their own dead,” I am confronted with the uncomfortable reality that following him means letting go of what feels safe and familiar. The disciples, like me, are often silent and cautious, unsure how to respond to the radical demands of faith.

Jesus’ words—“How much longer must I be with you?” and “The least is the greatest”—force me to ask: Am I following out of comfort or conviction? Where do I make excuses, and how can I surrender them? I realize that true discipleship is not about being in the spotlight or always understanding God’s plan, but about humility, service, and trust. It is about choosing mercy over retaliation, as Jesus did when he “shook the dust off his feet” rather than calling down fire on those who rejected him.

– Annie Skinner

Practice:

This week, I want to practice humility by listening more—especially when I am tempted to defend myself or control outcomes. I will reflect on the areas where I am holding back, making excuses, or seeking comfort instead of true discipleship. I invite you to join me: In what areas of your life is Jesus calling you to step forward in faith, even when the path is uncertain? What helps you move forward when faith feels risky or unclear?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Where in your life do you sense Jesus calling you to step out of your comfort zone and follow him more wholeheartedly?
2. What excuses or distractions tend to hold you back from true discipleship, and how might you surrender them to God?
3. How can you practice humility and mercy in your relationships this week?

Prayer:

Lord, give us courage to follow, even when it means surrendering our own plans. Help us to support one another by being living examples of love, mercy, and grace—encouraging each other when decisions are difficult and celebrating the small joys and acts of kindness that come our way each day. Amen



WEEK 6 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 10: 1-24

Reflection:

This story is recorded only in the Gospel of Luke and has famously shaped evangelism in our faith. Jesus shares the urgency of the good news with these seventy-two people, letting them know to travel lightly, relying on the goodness of God through the people that they meet. My favorite image from this passage is in verse 5, passing the peace. Doesn't that just sound wonderful?

Today is everyone's new favorite, Wesley Wednesday, when we explore some piece of our Methodist heritage together and how it relates to our passage for the day. After reading today's scripture, I can't help but think of the father of American Methodism, Francis Asbury. In 1763, Asbury became a Methodist preacher at the age of eighteen and John Wesley appointed him to begin travelling the country four years later. In 1771, he volunteered to go to America. Here is an excerpt from his journal: "September 12, 1771 – Whither am I going? To the New World. What to do? To gain honour? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No: I am going to live to God and to bring others to do so."

When the American Revolution broke out in 1776, he was one of two Methodist ministers to remain in America. He travelled the country accompanied by Harry Hosier, a freed slave who became the first African American to preach to a white congregation. Under Asbury's direction the Church grew from 1,200 to 214,000 members and ordained 700 preachers.

It's amazing what two people can do when serving God, is it not?

— Natalie Moon

Practice:

Maybe today's passage has inspired you to share your faith in some way. Is there someone that you can think of that would support you in that effort?

I want to invite you to listen to P E A C E (Acoustic version) by Hillsong young and Free as you consider these questions today.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Has anyone ever shared the peace of God with you?
2. What did that feel like?
3. Is there a way to share the peace of God with someone this week?



WEEK 6 | THURSDAY

Luke 10: 25-42

Reflection:

"You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your being, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." V.27

I have sat with this devotional open for almost a week. I have had a really hard time writing this one. It's the story of the good samaritan. This story is incredibly familiar in the Church world, and so I have been struggling to write something meaningful that has not already been said a thousand times. I have started and deleted quite a few openings, but nothing felt good enough. After some wrestling with this passage, I have landed on a thought. Maybe one of the most faithful things we can do as disciples of Jesus, is to revisit, retell, and trust in old truths. Today's story reminds us to love God and love neighbor in two different ways, and maybe thats enough for today and all days.

I have been asking myself, "why are the stories of the Good Samaritan and the story of Mary and Martha back to back?" I have also been asking "what is Luke trying to say?"

Part 1: Love your neighbor

The main question of this parable is "who is my neighbor?" Through the parable, Jesus shows us that there is no barrier to being a good neighbor, and more importantly he shows us what love looks like. If you want to be Jesus in this world, we go and care for the people in desperate need. Radical love breaks all the barriers.

Part 2: Love the Lord your God

Right after this parable, we get the story of Mary and Martha. A very different turn, but another lesson on what love looks like. Martha is busying being a good host. Mary is not playing host, but is instead attentively listening to Jesus. Jesus tells us that Mary is the better part because she is spending time with Jesus.

This grouping of passages begins with "what must I do to gain eternal life?" Jesus responds by giving us two examples. Love the Lord your God. Love your neighbor. The Samaritan shows us what love looks like. Mary shows us what loving God looks like. In today's 17 verses, we have two examples for us to live by and follow.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

REFRESH:

I don't want to complicate anything today. Here is our forever mission as disciples: Love God. Love Neighbor. Go and do likewise.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are barriers to loving God and neighbor?
2. How can we remove some of those barriers?

WEEK 6 | FRIDAY

Luke 11: 1-28

Reflection:

Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer always surprises me with its beautiful simplicity. Unlike the longer, familiar version from Matthew, Luke's prayer feels pared down—almost unfinished. Yet, in its brevity, it invites us to focus on what truly matters: reverence for God, daily sustenance, forgiveness, and deliverance. When I hear a congregation recite Matthew's version, I'm reminded that prayer is more than words—it's a shared heartbeat, connecting us to one another and to God.

Jesus prays constantly in Luke's Gospel. It is no wonder a disciple finally asks, "Teach us to pray." Jesus doesn't give a lecture. He gives him a window into God's heart. The prayer is spare: reverence, bread, forgiveness, deliverance. It echoes the wilderness stories – God feeding Israel day by day, God staying with them in danger, God's shaping them into a people who trust.

I love Eugene Peterson's rendering, "Father, reveal who you are." That is really prayer – isn't it? Not just asking for things but asking to see God more clearly. God invites us to ask, seek, and knock. Knock like you mean it, persistent neighbor! If we, who are ever so human would get up to help a neighbor, how much more will God do for us?

I experienced this profoundly when my son Matt took a job with the Methodist Church of England in Abaco Keys. Just as he was preparing to leave, Hurricane Frances – massive, unpredictable, terrifying – was barreling toward the islands. I begged him to wait. The church insisted that he go. And so, I did the unthinkable: I watched my child fly into path of a Category 5 storm. I wrestled with God that night. I prayed with a desperation I have never known. No matter, "my solution" came the realization that others would be harmed. Eventually, I prayed the only thing I could pray with honesty. "Let him know he is surrounded by love, no matter what happens. And may that be true for all the people."

Two days later, an angel in the likeness of a stranger with a satellite phone got word to us that he was safe. It felt like God answering both as a loving Father and the "neighbor" answering my persistent prayer.

Praying and releasing – at least a little – is still difficult for me. But I have learned this: God is not asleep. God is not indifferent. God is with us even in the storms we never would have chosen.

You will notice I completely sidestepped Beelzebul. However, it isn't wasted on me that deliverance was the last item in Luke's Lord's prayer. Jesus's final words in our selection are: "Blessed are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

Listening is always a two-way street, isn't it?

This week share with a friend or family member.

– Annie Skinner

Practice:

This week, try praying Luke's version of the Lord's Prayer each morning. Notice what words stand out to you and how they shape your day.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Where in your life right now are you knocking at the door at midnight?
2. Have you ever faced a moment when all you could do was to pray for love and protection?

Prayer:

God, reveal yourself to us this week in the reading of your word, in the presence of others, and the hurry in our minds. Give us eyes to see that you are near and ready to listen. Open our hearts to experience your grace and to share it with the world. Amen.



2026 READING PLAN

week 7

Welcome to Week 7!

We've got some good news and bad news for week 7! Ha!

The Bad News...

Just a heads up... a lot of tough words from Jesus this week. If you are like me, I am not nearly as comfortable with Jesus when he starts being more harsh and direct. However, that might be fitting this week as Ash Wednesday approaches.

The Good News!

Ash Wednesday is coming! Which means Lent is on the way. I know its a more serious time of the year in our Christian calendar, but its also distinct with our focus. We get to spend 40 days preparing for Easter. Go ahead and start making plans for how you will prepare.

Also coming up this week, we have our very own Rick Owen! Rick will be leading and planning our 6 pm Ash Wednesday Blues Service. Read his devotionals, and also make plans to worship with us this week for Ash Wednesday!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

February 16-20

Monday, February 16: Luke 11: 29-54

Tuesday, February 17: Luke 12: 1-21

Wednesday, February 18: Luke 12: 22-48

Thursday, February 19: Luke 12: 49-59

Friday, February 20: Luke 13: 1-21

WEEK 7 | MONDAY

Luke 11: 29-54

Weekly Word: Lamp

Word of the Week – Lamp (v. 34 and 35) “Your eye is the lamp of the body... see to it that the light in you isn’t darkness.”

Sometimes a good source of light helps us see things we may miss in our homes. What would it mean shine brighter this week and re-evaluate the parts in our life we don’t normally look at?

Reflection:

Woah... Ouch... Wild... Harsh... Necessary?

“When the crowds grew...” is how our reading starts. It’s a funny thing in the book of Luke, the crowds keep swelling around Jesus, and he keeps giving them reasons to leave. Jesus doesn’t pull any punches in this section. Jesus is doing a lot of work with some quick words:

1st – He is telling the crowds to open their eyes. They want something big and flashy. Maybe more signs, more miracles, more proof? He tells them the only sign they will get is the sign of Jonah which will be three days of darkness and then a triumphant return. His resurrection will be the only sign they need.

2nd – It’s not just about signs, but it’s about their openness. Our eyes are the lamp of the body. If our eyes only look for darkness, then we are prone to miss the light right in front of us. If they aren’t open, even the sign of Jonah (Jesus’ resurrection) won’t open their eyes.

3rd – A warning against performative religion. Jesus doesn’t hold back on the pharisees at dinner. He wants the show they put on in public to match what is happening on the inside.

I feel bad for the crowds... they want to get close to Jesus, but sometimes getting close to Jesus means we have to re-evaluate the way we live our lives and that can be uncomfortable.

I remember once several years ago I attended a one-day pastors conference called “the bishops day apart.” During this day, a guest bishop is brought in to encourage the pastors to continue their good work. Normally, this is a day where someone comes in and preaches, encourages, and builds up our church leaders. One year, a bishop by the name of Will Willimon was invited to speak. He had no intention of offering encouragement. He took the stage and accused every single pastor in our conference of being lazy, of caring too much about the wrong things, and he even accused us all of forgetting what it means to follow Jesus. It was stark. It was rude. It was offensive. And... it might have been needed. I don’t think he was entirely right..., but what his speech did was make me re-evaluate what was important and not important. Sometimes that is good and holy work. Maybe that is what Jesus was doing for the crowds and the pharisees in this passage of scripture.

(For the record, I love Will Willimon and will happily recommend his books or sermons if anyone is interested)

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Spend some time with these harsh words of Jesus. Then, shine some light on your life and see what Jesus is trying to highlight for us. This will be a theme in our reading this week.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who or what is someone in our life who can help us re-evaluate how we live?
2. How can we shine more light on our lives?



WEEK 7 | TUESDAY

Luke 12: 1-21

Reflection:

Guarding our Hearts: True Riches in God

Our scripture for today captures a powerful teaching from Jesus about the dangers of hypocrisy and the false security found in earthly possessions. He begins by warning the disciples and the crowds around them to beware of the “yeast of the Pharisees,” which is hypocrisy. He reminds us that everything hidden will ultimately be revealed, calling us to live with integrity and authenticity before God and others.

To make his point come to life he shares a parable of the rich fool, he tells the story of a man who stored up wealth for himself but neglected his relationship with God. The man believed that having an abundance of possessions would secure his future, yet his life was demanded of him that very night. Jesus concludes with a sobering lesson: “This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.”

Our challenge is to examine what we are truly seeking in life. Do we invest more energy in accumulating material wealth, or are we growing in generosity, faith, and our relationship with God? True security doesn’t come from what we own, but from knowing and loving God deeply. Today, let’s ask God to help us guard our hearts against greed and guide us in using our resources for His glory. May we strive to be “rich toward God,” laying up treasures in heaven rather than on earth.

– Rick Owen

Practice:

Spend some time examining where we invest our time and energy. What is helping grow our relationship with God? How do we maximize those things worth investing in?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are you investing in with your time?
2. How can we be rich toward God?

WEEK 7 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 12: 22-48

Reflection:

Today is Ash Wednesday. It is the start of Lent. It is the start of our long preparation for Easter. Traditionally we start with recognizing our need for both repentance and spiritual renewal. To help us in this work these are the words offered when we receive ashes, "From dust you were formed and to dust you shall return. Go forth and remember the gospel." Today is about remembering our mortality. The things we own, the earthly things we value, and even our own bodies will all one day be dust. Its a somber message, but also a hopeful one.

On Monday, I talked about Bishop Will Willimon, so its only fitting I talk about him again. Two days ago, I mentioned how he can be stark and offensive. The story coming is no exception ha! In seminary, I took a class with Bishop Willimon. On Ash Wednesday some ten years ago, he stood up in front of our class and told us all that, "Ash Wednesday is my favorite day of the year. Its the only day where I can look at every person, especially you young people, in the eyes and say 'you are dirt!'" I could always count on him for a good morbid laugh. His main point being, that Ash Wednesday is the great leveler. It is the day we remember that all the possessions, money, and treasures we've saved up, that stuff doesn't go with us when we pass. It is a reminder that we as disciples of Jesus live on a different value system. We are called to live in a way that values more than the physical.

Wesley Wednesday:

Funny enough, John Wesley wasn't a fan of Ash Wednesday. He didn't like the focus on repentance for just one day. He wanted the early Methodists to make this a daily habit. In fact, the Methodist church didn't even officially practice Ash Wednesday until the 1960's. John Wesley wanted Methodists to practice repentance daily. Maybe we can find ways to do this throughout lent?

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Let us continue Monday and Tuesday's work of reevaluation. As Jesus said in today's passage, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will also be." Where is your treasure? Where is your heart? Perhaps there is no better day on our church calendar to help us re-evaluate our priorities.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How do you feel about Ash Wednesday?
2. Do we repent enough?
3. What treasure is in your heart?



WEEK 7 | THURSDAY

Luke 12: 49-59

Reflection:

I am going to be honest, this is not a passage of scripture that I choose to spend a lot of time focusing on. On the surface, it is difficult to understand and just plain uncomfortable. I prefer the passages that give hope and connect us together. So as someone who has not spent a lot of time with this passage of scripture, I will defer to John Wesley. In John Wesley's "Notes on the Bible," he interprets Luke 12:49, "I am come to send fire on the earth", as the spreading of a holy, sincere love that burns up sin. He viewed the "fire" as a purifying force that transforms hearts, and the subsequent "division" as the inevitable conflict between this, holy love and the world's corruption. Wesley believed this divine love, ignited by the gospel, would inevitably cause conflict and division, acting as a refining, purifying, and ultimately consuming force in the world.

Holy love is a much more comfortable thought for me. It has been my experience that love changes things and can make us unrecognizable to our former selves. I think in its own way it does give us hope. Change inevitably causes friction, but that division is not the goal. Maybe it's what is necessary for true connection and hope.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH:

For today's practice, I invite you to sit with me in the discomfort. What part of this passage rings true? What kind of images and feelings rise to the surface as you read this? Think for a moment about what your experience has been with this divine love. Have you seen changes in your own life and in the world based on this love? How can love make us uncomfortable and divided? Has it been your experience that it eventually brings us together? On Thursdays we usually ask you to go somewhere different to consider the passage of scripture, and I would like to invite you to do the same today. Is there a place where you can sit in this discomfort, feeling the truth of this divine love and the discomfort that it can also bring?

I want to invite you to listen to a song by Andy Park and Lindell Cooley called Holy Love. It's an older worship song with amazing lyrics asking God to allow His Holy Love to flow within us and through us.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How can love make us uncomfortable and divided?
2. Has it been your experience it brings us together?



WEEK 7 | FRIDAY

Luke 13: 1-21

Reflection:

An Out-of-Control World and Mustard Seed Kingdom

We live in what can often be described as an out-of-control world. The morning, noon, and evening news is filled with stories of a world in chaos. What are we Christians to do? The temptation may be to become a hand-wringing, rumor spreading, discouraged people full of fear. It can relegate us to waiting for the next shoe to drop the next blanket of chaos to cover us with hopelessness.

In our scripture today Luke gives a peek into the interaction of Jesus and a crowd who is asking hard questions about Pilate's use of force against Galileans trying to make sacrifices, and the tower that fell on worshippers at Siloam. It was a backdoor question of asking what sin did they do that allowed this punishment on them. Jesus turned the questions back on them. "Do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem?" Later he is teaching in a synagogue and encounters a woman bent over with a disease of many years. He heals her, and immediately is chastised for healing on the Sabbath.

Jesus was challenging those who followed him to remember that they were not to dwell on the chaos, but be seeds of growth that provides the love and compassion for all those around us, and leaven to spread hope even that overcomes chaos.

– Rick Owen

Practice:

Go offer seeds of love and compassion. Call someone up, send a text, compliment a stranger. Show love.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

How can you spread seeds of love and compassion?



2026 READING PLAN

week 8

Welcome to Week 8!

We have made it into Lent! It is fitting we have a few tough passages to start the week since we are in the season of Lent. However, if you will continue through to Friday, some of the most loving parables of God's love are coming. Thank you for using our reading plan as a part of your Lenten practice. I pray it can help prepare us for Easter.

This week our very own Hill Carmichael will be featured on Tuesday and Friday. Just a sneak peak, if you are a fan of Harry Potter, Hill drops a few references!

Also, thank you all for the wonderful feedback, and for continuing to use this reading plan!!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

February 23-27

Monday, February 23: Luke 13: 22-35

Tuesday, February 24: Luke 14: 1-14

Wednesday, February 25: Luke 14: 15-24

Thursday, February 26: Luke 14: 25-35

Friday, February 27: Luke 15: 1-10

WEEK 8 | MONDAY

Luke 13: 22-35

Weekly Word: Know

Word of the Week – Know οἶδα (oida) The Greek word for “I know” in Luke 13:25. It refers to having a relational, experiential knowledge rather than just intellectual.

Reflection:

There is a song by Don Chaffer, one of my favorite Christian artists, called Long on Diagnosis Short on Cure. In his storytelling songwriting style, he paints a picture of spiritual conversations he had that seemed less concerned about the truth as to whether you said it right. This song comes to mind when I read today’s scripture.

Jesus gives one of the speeches that appears to intentionally make us uncomfortable; not many of us choose the narrow door. The “long on diagnosis”, performative things we do that appear to make us closer to God, actually don’t do anything for us or others. He is telling us to avoid a superficial faith. Jesus goes on saying that the owner of this home says “I don’t know you or where you come from.” Is it really that simple? That perhaps the “cure” is indeed a short answer, to KNOW God? Presence over perfection. Honesty and vulnerability before God. Maybe it’s just me, but I feel like the part about “where you come from” means to be honest about your hopes and struggles, and taking a real look at who you are and who God is in your life. He finishes this speech by telling us that the people entering through that door may be surprising.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

Listen to the song, Long on Diagnosis Short on Cure by Don Chaffer.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How does this passage initially make you feel?
2. Have any parts of your faith ever felt superficial?
3. How can you be more honest and vulnerable in your relationship with God?
4. What would it feel like for you to know God in a deeper way and to feel known by Him?



WEEK 8 | TUESDAY

Luke 14: 1-14

Reflection:

What kind of table?

Luke tells us that Jesus is invited to dinner at the house of a prominent Pharisee. And then Luke adds a detail that could easily be overlooked...“They were watching Him closely.”

This isn't just a meal. It feels more like a test.

There's a man at the table who needs healing. Everyone knows it and Jesus heals him.

Then Jesus comments on how people choose their seats at the table. Who moves closer to the host.

Who subtly positions themselves for visibility. Who wants to be seen.

In Jesus' world, tables communicated status. Where you sat revealed something about your value.

Meals reinforced social standing.

In Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince, Professor Slughorn hosts elaborate dinner parties for a carefully selected group of students. Invitations are extended based on talent, influence, and potential usefulness. It's a carefully curated table. If you're invited, it means something. If you're not, that means something too.

But there's another kind of table in that story — Dumbledore's table – often appearing at the beginning of most of the books and movies. Dumbledore consistently makes room for the overlooked. Hagrid. Lupin. Even Harry when others doubt him. His table isn't about usefulness or standing. It's about belonging.

Jesus is very clear about which table reflects the kingdom of God.

“When you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.”

Not because it improves your reputation. And not because it earns you something.

But because that is what grace and love look like. It's trusting that your worth is not determined by proximity to power or applause or usefulness. And when you are free from these things, you are free to do God's work. So perhaps our questions should be: Are we building Slughorn tables...shaped by influence and advantage? Or are we building kingdom tables...shaped by grace and love?

Jesus reminds us there is plenty of room at the table. The only question is whether our lives will reflect that truth.

– Hill Carmichael

Practice:

Invite someone to your table, not because of status, but out of belonging.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. When and where are you tempted to sit in the “best seat”?
2. Who around you might feel uninvited or unnoticed?
3. How does knowing your identity is secure in Christ free you to practice humility?



WEEK 8 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 14: 15-24

Reflection:

Today's passage is a continuation of the scripture from yesterday, but changes into a warning: don't let distractions get in the way of the grace that God has extended to us. In this parable, the distractions are the things that we own and even the relationships that we have (field, oxen, and spouse). Our presence matters when it comes to this holy relationship. I love that the servants are then instructed to invite EVERYONE to the feast, mentioning those on the fringes of society at the time.

As it is what we like to call Wesley Wednesday, I want to share John Wesley's thoughts on this passage. John Wesley viewed the parable of the great banquet as a powerful illustration of God's universal offer of grace, actively opposing the doctrine of unconditional election. He interpreted the banquet as the Gospel feast, open to all people, especially the marginalized, and urged immediate, personal acceptance of this invitation.

An article on the UMC website about this belief explains this further.

In 18th century England, some people felt welcome in the church, while others did not. Righting this wrong was part of the impetus of John Wesley and the early Methodist movement.

The first Methodists were intentional about welcoming everyone. They preached where people gathered, town squares and fields near mines. In their meetinghouses, they educated children and distributed medical care to those who could not afford to see a doctor. They also visited prisons to share the gospel of Jesus Christ there. These ministries grew out of what Wesley taught about God's grace. He used the phrase *prevenient* grace to describe the love God has for everyone, even before we are aware of it (*prevenient* means "coming before").

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

Charles Wesley wrote a hymn about this concept, *Come Sinners To the Gospel Feast*. You may be familiar with this hymn. For our practice today, I want to invite you to listen to the hymn. I am really loving the version by Jon Yerby, but any version will do.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Have there been things distracting you from the invitation that God has extended to you?
2. Has it affected your presence in your faith community?
3. Are there ways that we can continue the work of our fellow Methodists and be intentional about welcoming EVERYONE?



WEEK 8 | THURSDAY

Luke 14: 25-35

Reflection:

This is the end of a run of difficult words from Jesus (it gets happy and hopeful again tomorrow!). If you have been following along in Luke, this is the end of several chapters of warnings that following Jesus won't be easy. In my Bible, today's verses are titled, "the Cost of Discipleship." Jesus keeps gathering large crowds, and then keeps trimming them down with his words. Today is no exception:

V. 26 – "whoever come to and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even life itself cannot be my disciple."

V. 27 – "Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me cannot be my disciple"

V. 33 – "none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

Jesus wants these crowds to truly consider the cost... and the cost is a lot... This must be important to Jesus because he's been doing this for several chapters. Outside of the disciples, I wonder how many in the crowds continued on with them? I wonder why Jesus would want to scare people away?

It got me thinking... when was the last time my faith required me to sit down and consider the cost? What does following Jesus look like in at work? In our homes? Our friendships? How can we keep our discipleship at the forefront of our minds?

Cost is a funny word because while we do give up certain things following Jesus, we also know that this is the life that makes our souls jump. Following Jesus gives us purpose, gives us meaning, and gives us joy. It's rarely easy, its rarely passive, but it is so good.

Jesus doesn't want us to give up things in life just because he asks it of us. Jesus knows how we are designed. He knows how we function. He knows what will give us joy. Though there is a cost, there is also so much gain.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

REFRESH:

For today's practice, let's take a minute to reflect on our life, maybe even pull out a journal. What has the cost been for discipleship? Do our lives feel enriched by our discipleship journey? Where in life have we had crossroads putting our discipleship first? What has the outcome been on our lives?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What is Jesus doing with this words or warning?
2. What does it look like to consider the cost of following Jesus?
3. How has your life been enriched by this cost?

WEEK 8 | FRIDAY

Luke 15: 1-10

Reflection:

Being Found

“The Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, ‘This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.’”
That’s the complaint.

So Jesus tells two stories. A shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine to search for one sheep. And a woman who turns her house upside down looking for one coin.

Both stories tell us something about being lost...and being found. But more than that, they are about the heart of the One who searches.

In Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone, Harry discovers the Mirror of Erised. When he looks into it, he doesn’t see himself as he is. He sees what he most deeply longs for — his parents, alive, standing behind him. The mirror reveals his heartache. To be known. To be loved. To find something precious that was lost.

We may not stand in front of a magical mirror, but we all carry something similar inside us. Longings we don’t name out loud. Regrets we hope no one sees. Moments when we wonder if we’ve wandered too far, fallen too short or that we’ve made too many mistakes.

Here is the good news of Luke 15:

The sheep does not find the shepherd. The shepherd finds the sheep.

The coin does not search for the woman. The woman searches for the coin.

And when what was lost is found, there is no scolding. No “I told you not to go over there.” There is just joy.

Jesus is telling us something about God’s own heart. God is not distant. God searches. God notices. God moves toward the one. And with that movement Luke 15 reveals God’s deepest joy — that we would be found.

And when that happens, all of heaven celebrates.

– Hill Carmichael

Practice:

Today, let this truth sink in: You are not invisible to God. You have not wandered too far. You have not made too many mistakes. You are not unworthy. You are searched for and you are found. And when we start believing this truth...God’s own heart is filled with joy.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. When have you felt “lost”? What did it feel like to be found?
2. What longing do you carry that feels unseen?
3. How does it shape your understanding of God to imagine heaven rejoicing over you?



2026 READING PLAN

week 9

Welcome to Week 9!

9 weeks of Luke, 9 weeks of Jesus, and 45 days of Scripture readings! Thank you for being on this journey. The last few weeks had a lot of tough words of Jesus. If you are like me, some of the readings made me uncomfortable, and they were words I needed to hear. I hope you are also finding both comfort and challenge through our readings.

This week we are featuring Eleanor Kerr! Eleanor is our Assistant Youth Director, and she will be writing our Tuesday and Friday reflections. Speaking of our Youth Ministry, they have their big Discovery Weekend March 13-15. As you read Eleanor's reflections, also be in prayer for the students, staff, and all the amazing work that will be done here at Canterbury that weekend. If you see our youth staff, offer some love and encouragement as they are in their final days of preparation!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

February 23-27

Monday, March 2: Luke 15: 11-32 — The Prodigal Son

Tuesday, March 3: Luke 16: 1-18 — The Coming of the Kingdom

Wednesday, March 4: Luke 16: 19-31 — The Rich Man and Lazarus

Thursday, March 5: Luke 17: 1-19 — Forgiveness and Gratitude

Friday, March 6: Luke 17: 20-37 — The Shrewd Manager

WEEK 9 | MONDAY

Luke 15: 11-32

Weekly Word: Ran

Reflection:

For me, this is the ultimate parable. Jesus is speaking to everyone. The beginning of chapter 15 tells us this is a diverse crowd. Luke tells us there are tax collectors, sinners, pharisees, legal experts, and his disciples. With this diverse crowd, Jesus seizes the moment and gives us a parable where every walk of life can find meaning. Maybe in your life you felt like the Prodigal son. Maybe in your life you felt like the older brother. Maybe in your life you felt like the father patiently waiting.

The behavior of the father in this story reflects the behavior of God all throughout scripture: When Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree, the sound of God's feet could be heard as God went searching for them.

When Hagar was kicked out of Abraham's household, God went searching and appeared to her in the desert.

When Jacob was terrified to be reunited with Esau, God showed up and spent the entire night with him.

The father in our parable, kept an eye out for his son. The moment he saw his son, he ran and closed the distance. When the older brother was upset, the father went to him. When we are at our lowest, when we are lost, covered in shame, or scared of the future, God comes running. God doesn't let distance sit. God chases after us and closes the distance.

Whether you feel like a disciple of Jesus, a tax collector, a pharisee, a sinner, the younger brother, the older brother, or a skeptical legal expert, Jesus has a story for you. God will show up. No matter what we are going through, God runs to us.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

As you go about walking today, listen to the sound your footsteps make. If you are in a low place, know that is the very sound God makes when God runs to us.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How does it feel to imagine God running?
2. Have you ever felt God rush to you when you were in a bad spot?
3. Who is God calling us to run to?



WEEK 9 | TUESDAY

Luke 16: 1-18

Reflection:

In this reading, the Pharisees ask Jesus directly when they will see evidence of the Kingdom of God. Jesus replies by explaining that it is not something they can see or “find”. Instead, he explains, they have already experienced it and will continue to throughout ordinary moments in life. He then continues with a warning. People who are not actively aware of God’s presence will be lost when they face hardships. They will not be able to handle the waiting and the suffering because they will have been looking for comfort in the wrong places. Jesus goes on to talk about Noah and Lot’s experiences. They were ordinary people living ordinary lives when God made himself known. He did so in a way that forced people to wake up and to become aware of what truly matters. Jesus ends by explaining that there will be a moment when the Son of Man returns and that will be a true test of who is paying attention and who is just passively following God.

This reading pushes me to ask myself where I have been looking for comfort and reassurance. When I am not experiencing joyful moments or not surrounded by people that are obvious reminders, it is really easy to forget that God is present.

After reading, I picked up my phone and started scrolling on Instagram as I do way too often. I started watching videos and came across one that was made with AI. As a 25 year old, I am embarrassed to admit that I did not realize it was fake. After realizing, it made me think...in a world where anything can be altered or fake, why am I so quick to trust everything I see, but yet, cannot trust that God is present just as easily?

In this teaching, Jesus warns us that the danger is that we stop paying attention. When we turn to things that feel comfortable, we are training ourselves to ignore or miss God’s quieter presence. This passage is inviting us to slow down and practice noticing God now, in ordinary and unremarkable moments, so that when the tough times come, our trust isn’t built on what looks real, but on what actually is. It challenges us to be attentive and to recognize God in the small, everyday ways, and to remember that faith grows in the quiet, unseen moments rather than the dramatic or obvious ones.

– Eleanor Kerr

Practice:

Write down three ordinary people or places you experienced God through each day this week.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Does God show up more in the ordinary or the extraordinary times of life?
2. What is something mundane God has used to talk to you?



WEEK 9 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 16: 19-31

Reflection:

Well... one of the more terrifying parables... but yet so beautiful.
Before we get to some interpretations, here are a few quick facts!

- 1) To my knowledge, this is the only parable that uses proper names: Lazarus and Abraham.
- 2) This is the only time Lazarus is mentioned in Luke. In the book of John, Jesus raises his good friend Lazarus back from the dead. This could very well be the same Lazarus, but there is no real evidence connecting the two other than the name.
- 3) The name Lazarus = God will help

Traditional View:

Traditionally this story is preached as a warning. The rich man lived a life anti to the gospel. He ignored the poor. He missed his chance to live as God requires, and his ultimate place is not good...

On the reverse side, Lazarus, who suffered a terrible life, who had no rewards on earth, is rewarded in the next life. The ultimate message in this view is that our decisions on how we treat people in this life matter greatly.

What does it mean to be blessed?:

I have also heard it preached that this parable is for the pharisees. A few verses earlier, we see that Jesus is talking directly to these religious leaders. The pharisees seem to believe that their titles, status, and wealth mean they are favored and blessed by God. Perhaps they think that anyone who has to beg for a living is not favored by God which is why Lazarus is seen with the dogs.

The main message of the parable is that God's blessings look different than we think they do. Lazarus, who had nothing, was carried up by the angels while the rich man who had everything ends up with regrets. Even the dogs (who are unclean animals) know how to care better for Lazarus than the pharisees who study the Bible do...

Warning for to keep watch:

This parable is a warning about our blindness. The rich man knows Lazarus' name. He must have encountered him many times maybe even daily. The rich man knows him, but doesn't know how to help...

The main message: who is God putting directly in our lives daily? How is God calling us to see, to know, and to act on behalf of someone who is hurting right in front of us?

There are so many ways to read this parable. Maybe they all have some truth, and maybe that is the beauty of parables.

Wesley Wednesday:

John Wesley preached on this parable in Birmingham, UK 1788. In a quick summary, John Wesley talks about the strange workings of God. God sends the Lazarus' of the world to the rich. God sends the rich to the Lazarus'. The rich need a Lazarus to remind them of their spiritual needs, and the Lazarus' need the rich to care for their physical needs. God has designed a world where all people need each other. And if we all care for each other, maybe we can all be carried off on angels wings much like Lazarus was in the parable.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Look out for your Lazarus and rich man today. If you feel like the rich man, look for who God is placing in your path. If you feel more like Lazarus, look for who you can talk about the strange workings of God. We all need each other.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Do any of the above interpretations sit poorly with you? Why?
2. What is Jesus ultimately saying with this parable?
3. Who is the Lazarus in our life Jesus is putting in our path? about welcoming EVERYONE?



WEEK 9 | THURSDAY

Luke 17: 1-19

Reflection:

I love this passage of scripture. There is something so freeing about the emphasis on forgiveness and our responsibility to our fellow human beings in the first passage, isn't there? Like we know in our souls that it is our purpose in life to look out for one another. We mess up, we ask for forgiveness, and we forgive. Not flippantly, but with all the care of someone who knows their responsibility.

I also have leaned on the faith of a mustard seed verse many, many, MANY times in my life. When I'm feeling like I don't have enough faith, I read this passage and it feels like Jesus is speaking directly to me. I know that I AT LEAST have the faith of a tiny little mustard seed. I think about all of the people who have poured their own stories and faith into my life and know that if I have a faith even of a fraction of what they have had, I can make it through anything.

As strange as the story about the servant seems after the statement about the mustard seed, it always makes me think that humility and faith go hand in hand. One cannot be separated from the other. There is something so freeing about humility as well, isn't there? That the world and the kingdom of God is so much bigger than us and yet we are called to play an important role.

And then one of my favorite stories of all, Jesus heals not one but TEN people at once. He ends by showing that as amazing as the physical healing is, his primary concern is that of our souls. I want to invite you to listen to a song that I love called Catch the Wind by Melissa Hesler (on the Bethel Starlight album). For some reason it always reminds me of this passage because it describes the freeing feeling that comes with a confidence in a faith that is at the very least the size of a mustard seed.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH:

On Thursdays we ask you to go to a new place to experience the scripture for the day, but I want to invite you to do something else. Find something incredibly small, like a mustard seed, and hold it in your hand while you pray after reading this scripture. What does it feel like to have a faith that is at the very least the size of a mustard seed?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How do you feel when you read this scripture?
2. Have you ever felt like you needed the reminder that faith in any size can make a difference in your life and the lives of others?
3. How is humility related to faith in your life?

Reflection:

In this Parable, a property manager upsets his master by slacking and wasting his property. The manager, knowing he is about to be fired, starts to spiral at the thought of being left jobless and homeless. He quickly makes the decision to lower the debts owed to his master to try and form relationships with the hope they would eventually take him in.

The definition of shrewd is “having or showing sharp powers of judgment”.

Shrewd...that doesn't mean unjust, manipulative, sinful, or dishonest. In fact, it actually has a positive connotation. But the manager was unjust, manipulative, selfish, dishonest...so why would he be referred to in such a complimentary way?

His master praises him for his quick and wise decision making instead of being angry for the dishonest approach he took.

Jesus uses this Parable to challenge us to be the same way. To use the resources we have...whether that is a lot or a little...wisely.

One of my series I led at Junior High Midweek was titled The Underdog. We looked at a ton of unexpected, overlooked people in the Bible that God chose to work through. I would categorize this manager as one of those underdogs. He had made mistakes, failed, and was in a vulnerable position, but yet, Jesus points to him as an example for us to mirror. Instead of accepting his failures and giving up, he was bold and used the little time and power he had left in an intentional way. We are called to do the same...to use our time, influence, and resources intentionally in ways that serve a deeper purpose and reflect what truly matters.

– Eleanor Kerr

Practice:

This week, identify one resource you have (time, a specific skill, money, or relationships) and use it intentionally to serve someone else. Don't wait for the perfect moment, use what you already have and choose to act.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What comes to mind when you think of the word shrewd? Is that how you would want to be described?
2. How is God calling you to use your resources to build God's Kingdom?



2026 READING PLAN

week 10

Welcome to Week 10!

Hello everyone! We are getting awfully close to Holy Week!! This week Jesus ventures to Jericho. This is last stop before returning to Jerusalem. Our daily readings will start on Holy Week readings well before we enter into Holy Week itself. This will allow us to linger longer on these powerful passages, and get us truly ready for Easter.

This week we have our very own Valerie Boyd! If you know Valerie, you know she is the embodiment of love. Valerie is our Executive Director of Encore and Sage Ministries. She is leading us on our Tuesday and Friday devotionals. She preaches the love of Jesus with her life, and now we are lucky to hear that translated into her written words. I hope we all can learn from her life and witness!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

Monday, March 9: Luke 18: 1-17 — Persistent Widow & Little Children

Tuesday, March 10: Luke 18: 18-30 — The Rich Ruler

Wednesday, March 11: Luke 18: 31-43 — Jesus Predicts His Death & Heals a Blind Beggar

Thursday, March 12: Luke 19: 1-10 — Zacchaeus the Tax Collector

Friday, March 13: Luke 19: 11-27 — The Parable of the Ten Minas

WEEK 10 | MONDAY

Luke 18: 1-17

Word of the Week: Humbled

Humbled, ταπεινῶ (tapeinoō) in Luke 18:14, refers to humbling oneself, submitting one's heart to God, or reducing oneself to a "lowly" or "grounded" state, often used as a metaphor for proper spiritual attitude.

Reflection:

Today's passage is reminding us in three different ways of what the position of our heart should be in when we approach God. It shouldn't be perfect, it should be persistent, like the widow. It shouldn't celebrate its own righteousness, it should be humble like the tax collector's heart. It shouldn't be as one who cannot be impressed or is cynical, but full of wonder like the children.

I read this passage and I cannot help but feel sorry for the Pharisee in the parable. This is a person who got caught up in the things that are evident of a faithful life, but somehow missed the point of the actions altogether. These actions, when coming from a humble heart, are sincere and beautiful. Using them as a comparison tool against others, not so much.

This passage of scripture reminds me of one of my favorite songs, The Day Is Dawning by Jill Phillips. When I was in college, I was a camp counselor at the UMC camp on St. Simon's Island, Epworth-by-the-Sea. I would wake my campers up every day by singing them this song because it was such a beautiful reminder that we get the opportunity to come before God each and every day and ask for the things we need to face each day.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to the song "The Day Is Dawning" and make it your persistent, humble, full of wonder, daily prayer this week.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Have you ever persistently prayed about something? What was the result? Did you change? Did the situation change? What does humility before God feel like to you?
2. What does it mean to be lowly or grounded?
3. When was the last time you really marveled in wonder at something? Was it an amazing sunset? A new baby? Have you ever felt that wonder in your relationship with God?



WEEK 10 | TUESDAY

Luke 18: 18-30

Reflection:

In Luke 18:18-30, we meet a rich young ruler who seems to have everything going for him. He's successful, respected, and he tries to live a good life. But when Jesus tells him to give up the thing he loves most...his wealth and then follow Him, he walks away sad and confused. That part really hits, because it shows us that following Jesus isn't just about being "good" or checking religious boxes. It's about what has our heart. We may not struggle with giving up money, but we all have something that's hard to let go of. Whether it is relationships, sports, grief, social media, or the need to be in control. Jesus isn't trying to take away our joy; He's inviting us into something better, something deeper. When we hold onto things too tightly, they can keep us from fully trusting Him. But when we let go and choose Jesus first, even when it's hard, we gain something way greater than what we give up and that is a deeper relationship with Him and a life that truly matters and feels good.

– Valerie Boyd

Practice:

Reflect on the things that we are holding on too tightly. What would it mean to loosen our grips? What if joy is waiting on the other side of letting go?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are we holding on to too tightly?
2. What is Jesus inviting us to let go of?
3. How can letting go offer you joy?



WEEK 10 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 18: 31-43

Reflection:

The first part of today's scripture reading always inspires more questions in me than answers. Why was the meaning of Jesus's words hidden? Did Luke just add that line to make the disciples look better? Were they ignorant to the purpose Jesus's life was to serve in the world? Was it hidden because the disciples would have lacked the courage to continue to follow Jesus at that time?

As it is Wesley Wednesday, I thought I would share John's thoughts on the matter. According to John Wesley's Explanatory Notes upon the New Testament, the meaning in Luke 18:31-34 was hidden from the disciples because they could not reconcile Jesus's prophecy of his suffering and death with their preconceived opinion of the Messiah. Their minds were so occupied with the expectation of a reigning kingdom that they could not grasp the necessity of a suffering savior. If I can summarize his thoughts, the disciples' own expectations made them blind to reality.

It's kind of beautiful that the story of the blind beggar receiving his sight is told next in the Gospel of Luke, isn't it? It is reminiscent of the Parable we read on Monday about the persistent widow, except this one actually happened! The man continuously sought the attention and mercy of Jesus, and was rewarded with not only a physical but spiritual healing.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to one of my favorite songs, Thy Mercy by Sandra McCracken. My favorite is from the Indelible Grace album, but all the versions are good. How does mercy and praise go hand in hand in your own life?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Is there something in your own life that you need ask God to help you see more clearly?
2. Have you ever associated clarity with mercy?
3. How are the two related?



WEEK 10 | THURSDAY

Luke 19: 1-10

Reflection:

This is one of my all time favorite passages in scripture. Today, we get to meet Zacchaeus. He is the Chief Tax Collector. He is short. He is good at climbing trees. He is curious about Jesus. Other than that, we are left filling in the gaps in his story because that is all the information we are given. Zacchaeus is never again mentioned anywhere else in scripture. His story is summed up in 10 short verses, but what a powerful story it is.

On Tuesday this week, Valerie helped us consider the story of the rich young ruler. The rich young ruler asks, “what must I do to earn eternal life?” Jesus tells him to “give away his possessions.” The rich young ruler walks away, and we are left guessing the ending of the story. In today’s passage, Zacchaeus gives away half his possessions to the poor AND he repays anyone he wronged four times more than the original offense. How does Jesus respond? He says, “salvation has come to this house.” This is the only time in Luke Jesus uses the word, “salvation” and that seems significant.

Imagine what it must be like to have Jesus publicly declare salvation on you. Imagine what it must feel like to know beyond a shadow of a doubt that Jesus is pleased with the way you are living your life. Since Zacchaeus is the Chief Tax Collector, we most always imagine he is despised by many. This man who normally receives hate from his neighbors, is now wrapped up by the love and acceptance of Jesus. We don't know the ending for the Rich Young Ruler, but we do know the ending for Zacchaeus. Maybe the Rich Young Ruler followed Jesus’ words and maybe he didn't. However, we do know Zacchaeus followed what Jesus said, and the ending is powerfully amazing.

Maybe that truth is with us too. Maybe Jesus is so incredibly proud of us for doing our best to follow his life. Maybe Jesus is loudly telling us how much we are loved for all the ways we are trying to be his disciple. May we, like Zacchaeus, know beyond a shadow of a doubt that we are loved and accepted by Jesus.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

REFRESH:

Next time you are in a crowd of people, take this story with you. When you are in a crowd, imagine what it must be like to have Jesus publicly claim you and to also have Jesus tell everyone how much he loves you. I believe Jesus is saying that to all of his disciples if we are willing to listen.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What must it feel like to be Zacchaeus?
2. Have you ever known for sure God was proud of you?
3. How can we share that same love and acceptance to others?



WEEK 10 | FRIDAY

Luke 19: 11-27

Reflection:

In Luke 19:11-27, Jesus tells a story about a master who gives his servants money to manage while he's away. When he returns, he rewards the ones who used what they were given faithfully, but the servant who hid his portion and did nothing is corrected. The message is clear: God wants us to use what He's given us.

For us, that can look like showing up for people who are struggling. They are all around us. Maybe it's listening to a friend who's hurting, sending an encouraging card or text, praying with someone, or just simply sitting with them when they feel alone. We don't have to do something big or impressive. God simply just wants us to be faithful with our gifts, time, and most of all our compassion He's given us. When we use our gifts to care for others and walk alongside them, we're living out what He calls us to do. We are all in this together and I truly believe God puts all the right people in our lives at just the right time.

Valerie Boyd

Practice:

This morning, pray: "God, help me notice the people You place in front of me today. Show me who needs encouragement, kindness, or simply someone to listen." Then go through your day expecting that the people you cross paths with aren't random. They might be there on purpose.

Be mindful of small nudges. Maybe someone who seems quieter than usual, a friend who looks stressed, someone sitting alone, or even a name that randomly comes to mind. Instead of brushing it off, act on it. Send the text. Start the conversation. Offer to pray. Sit beside them.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who is on your mind that God is nudging you towards?
2. Is there anyone in your life who is quieter than usual?
3. How is God asking you to use your compassion?



2026 READING PLAN

week 11

Welcome to Week 11!

Hello everyone! Holy Week and Easter are getting ever closer!!

In our readings this week, we start encountering some famous Holy Week passages. We will start with Palm Sunday, and go straight into Jesus teaching at the Temple. Before you start your readings this week, pause and take a moment to consider Jesus' context. Imagine what it must've been like for Jesus to ride into Jerusalem. I wonder what he was feeling and thinking? I wonder if he knew all the details waiting for him? I wonder if he was busy rehearsing his parables and teachings? I wonder if he got any sleep this week? Let's spend time trying to imagine life in Jesus' shoes before we jump into Luke.

This week's readings will feature Maddie Moravek! Maddie is our Assistant Director of Children's Ministry. You see her every week leading our children's moments in worship, and now you can hear some of her thoughts on Tuesday and Friday's devotionals. As always, thanks for reading!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

Monday, March 16: Luke 19: 28-44 — The Triumphal Entry

Tuesday, March 17: Luke 19: 45-48 — Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Wednesday, March 18: Luke 20: 1-19 — Jesus' Authority Questioned

Thursday, March 19: Luke 20: 20-47 — Taxes, Resurrection, & the Messiah

Friday, March 20: Luke 21: 1-19 — The Widow's Offering & Signs of the End

WEEK 11 | MONDAY

Luke 19: 28-44

Word of the Week: King

This passage is full of kingly references. It is full of Old Testament references. It is full of context we can only guess at. However, one thing is clear for us: Jesus is King. Jesus comes into Jerusalem fulfilling many prophecies of the Old Testament. He doesn't come in the way people expected. He doesn't show up with power. He shows up on a borrowed colt to represent the type of Kingdom he will bring for all.

Reflection:

What an incredible story! Today we encounter Luke's version of Palm Sunday. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus has been slowly making his way towards Jerusalem. He arrives in the city just in time for pass-over. There are so so so many things happening in our story, so let's highlight a few!

Jesus is King

a) King of Israel – from the Old Testament (2 Kings 9), we know that the kings of Israel were welcomed with the laying down of cloaks especially on their day of coronation. The people of Jerusalem welcome Jesus with the laying down of their cloaks and with the quoting of 2 scripture passages – Psalm 118 and Zechariah 9. They are publicly proclaiming they want Jesus as king even if they don't fully recognize the type of Kingdom Jesus is bringing.

b) King of the Least of These – When other important leaders arrived in Jerusalem, they came into the city with armies, horses, weapons, and as much power as they can muster. Jesus comes into Jerusalem on a borrowed colt. Other leaders want to show off their power, but Jesus only wants to show the peace he offers.

c) King of Creation – When Jesus is asked to rebuke his disciples from singing, he gives this incredibly answer, "if the disciples were to be quiet then the stones would shout." Jesus is so worthy of praise that if the people fail to recognize him as king, then creation itself will sing in our place.

-Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

N.T. Wright once said, "the building blocks of the Kingdom of God are acts of love and kindness." Let's follow Jesus' example, and build up the kingdom of God today. Every act of love, kindness, and generosity, are the very bricks God uses to build.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What kind of kingdom do you think Jesus represents?
2. Have you ever experienced creation picking up Jesus' song?



WEEK 11 | TUESDAY

Luke 19: 45-48

Reflection:

This week in the gospel of Luke, we get to see Jesus teaching in the Temple. The Temple holds important cultural and religious significance for the Israelite people, and Jesus himself found solace in it. During the days leading up to Passover, many religious pilgrims would come to Jerusalem and go to the Temple for prayer, and holiday preparation. These preparations included the purchase of animals for sacrifice and due to the influx of travelers, the price of sacrificial animals was unfairly increased. When Jesus speaks that this Temple has become a “den of robbers” he’s not just making a reference to money. Jesus is referring to a heart breaking scene in which people’s faith is being taken advantage of for the financial gain of others.

Oftentimes our practice of faith can turn into a checklist. I write this as I look over at my Bible highlighters (both rainbow and pastel) and the countless journals I bought because I swore I would journal every single day. I realize that this checklist isn’t “one size fits all”, but most Christians have one. As we all try to complete this impossible checklist, we end up buying things, doing things, or focusing on things that aren’t actually helping us grow closer to God. Turns out, that faith didn’t come from all of my mini shopping trips for supplies, it came in the small moments. Moments where I would see a beautiful day and be reminded of how much God loves creation, or when on a bad day when all I want to do is cry, God is there listening to everything.

When we feel like we need to check certain boxes of material goods to gain access to the love of God, we have missed the mark. When Jesus went to the Temple he wasn’t condemning the people who were seeking sources for their holidays, he was condemning the sellers. We don’t have to keep selling the idea that faith is hidden in a box of bible highlighters, faith is in the people! It’s in the flowers that bloom after a rainy day, it’s in the hugs we get from loved ones, it’s in the silence where God never leaves us.

– Maddie Moravek

Practice:

Take a minute to think of your mental faith checklist. What’s on it? Reading the Bible, praying, being kind, or something else? After the list is finished, rest in the knowledge that you are loved no matter what has a check and what doesn’t.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What’s on your checklist?
2. What is Jesus inviting us to let go of?



WEEK 11 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 20: 1-19

Reflection:

Really interesting passage today!

A couple of things to highlight:

Jesus is teaching in the temple – So far in his ministry, Jesus has been teaching in various settings. Jesus taught in the fields, on the water, in the towns, the country side, and many different synagogues. This is the first time Jesus has returned to the temple since chapter 2 when his parents lost him. Yesterday, we read how he cleared the temple. Today, we see him taking his authority and teaching in the temple

The Chief Priests Show Up to Listen – So far in Luke, Jesus has conversed with all kinds of religious authorities and many different scribes and pharisees. Now, here in the temple, in the center of Jerusalem, Jesus has drawn out the chief priests. The chief priests are skeptical of Jesus.

In verses 9-19, Jesus gives his most obvious parable. This time, even the chief priests know its meaning, and they do not like where they stand. God entrusted the “vineyard” to them, and they have mishandled it. This makes them so angry that later they will turn against Jesus.

Wesley Wednesday:

John Wesley had a name for people like our chief priests. He called these types of people, “almost christian.” The almost christian, is someone who has outward morality and religious education, but they lack the inner spiritual transformation of the heart. Our pharisees, scribes, and chief priests in Luke, know the scriptures, but fail to recognize the author of scripture right in front of them. It is an easy trap to fall into, but the good news is that John Wesley believed he found the cure. If you fear being an almost christian, then John Wesley has three simple rules to follow:

1. Do No Harm
2. Do Good
3. Stay in Love with God

If you are ever in doubt, let these three simple rules guide you.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Today practice the three simple rules: Stop yourself from causing harm.

Next, go further. Do good for someone you come across.

Lastly, go further still. Do something that will help you fall in love with God.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Do you ever fear being an almost christian?
2. What practices help you fall in love with God?
3. Which simple rule is the hardest to practice?



WEEK 11 | THURSDAY

Luke 20: 20-47

Reflection:

In today's passage of scripture, we get to hear Jesus navigate two of the most divisive topics in history, money and marriage. We certainly hear a lot of opinions about these topics today. Those who are trying to trap Jesus in a sticky situation, waiting for the gotcha moment, never get it because as Jesus reminds us again and again, they (and sometime we) have missed the point completely. The Kingdom of God does not operate the way our world operates.

Last year, my kids and I were able to go with my husband on his school trip to Denver, where he has been attending seminary classes. While he was in class, we would find random things to do and one day we chose to visit the Denver mint, where not only a lot of US money is minted, but coins for countries all over the world. Before you get to enter the factory portion of the building, you are taken on a tour of coins minted throughout history, even dating back to Jesus's day and age. It was walking through these displays that made it really hit home for me that money is one of the oldest systems in existence. Marriage, in all of its variations throughout history, is similar in this way. They are also both systems with which we have some sort of lifelong relationship. They are systems that record the history of our families. They help us make sense of ancient cultures and more recent events. These topics are even used to try and understand people's motivations and actions.

So while Luke explains to us that Jesus was asked these questions as a trap, I can't help but feel that everyone who was listening tuned in just a little bit more when Jesus talked about these things. I feel like these are questions we have all had at one time or another, because navigating these things in a way that feels holy, that allows us to be the best versions of ourselves, and that allows us to uplift others does not seem easy. And yet, the answers appear to be so simple. Render to God what is God's. Children of the resurrection are God's children and are like the angels who never die. The things that we concern ourselves with on earth are not eternal. So what is God's? The way I read it is that WE are God's so we need to continually give ourselves to Him. God's kingdom does not have or need the systems that we have on earth. In God's kingdom, we are transformed completely, rendering our hearts and souls and lives to God.

Jesus then goes on to warn about teachers of the law that love the honor associated with their place in society, instead of the people that they are actually serving.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH:

Today is what we like to call Thursday Refresh and we invite you to read scripture in a new place. Is there a place where you had a revelation of some kind? Maybe where you realized the world or the kingdom of God was so much bigger than you thought? Maybe you reread the scripture under the stars tonight and think about how light from those stars took years and years to reach us today from across the universe. There is a song I love called Martyrs and Thieves by Jennifer Knapp. She uses imagery to show how worldly worries steal the things from our lives that we should render to God. I want to invite you to listen to it and think about what it means to render unto God what is God's.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does that mean to you?
2. What is a part of your life that you need to give to God?
3. Have carried the weight of the world with you without realizing it?

WEEK 11 | FRIDAY

Luke 21: 1-19

Reflection:

Chapter 21 in the Gospel of Luke provides a harsh reminder of our world as Jesus speaks about times of great suffering and strife. Luke is written for an audience of primarily Gentiles, people who were not born Jewish and had not experienced the Israelite's plight of the past 2,000 years. Keeping this in mind, when Jesus talks about the signs of the end, the author is emphasizing that following Jesus may reflect the history of the Jewish people and will not be easy. Gentile followers of Jesus were unfamiliar with many of the common practices and nuanced cultural understandings of Jesus that the Israelites already had. The placement of this passage is crucial in telling the story of the ministry and experience of Jesus.

If your first reaction upon reading about the end times is "AH!" and then to close your Bible, you aren't alone. It is uncomfortable to think about suffering, especially when we think about the kind of suffering that we see in our world. Jesus speaks about great betrayals and heart breaks, something that everyone has experienced at some point, but suffering is not something we can turn off and ignore. When Jesus speaks in this passage, I imagine him to be preaching passionately, with evident sadness. Jesus knew that he would die for our sins and that life for his followers would not be easy. He so loved humanity, that he knew that he had to share exactly what was going to happen.

In all of the suffering that is talked about in this passage, Jesus gives us hope. Verses 18-19 read "But not a hair of your head will perish. Stand firm, and you will win life." Jesus gives us hope with one single command; to stand firm. When everything feels impossible, when life feels overwhelming, when it would be just so much easier to turn from God, Jesus compels us to stand firm. Stand firm in knowing that God loves us, and loves our world. Stand firm in loving others.

This past fall in children's ministry we took a great group of 4th-6th graders on a weekend retreat to Camp Sumatanga. Before we left I was so anxious about not having phone service, worrying about what my dog would do with me being gone for a whole night (spoiler alert: he was completely fine, he was spoiled with treats), and stressing over if something would go wrong. The weekend without my phone ended up being not just an amazing time for all the kids to connect, but it also reminded me of the importance of stillness. On our last day of the retreat we hiked to a beautiful chapel on top of a mountain and it was at the top of that mountain, sweaty and tired, that I felt so connected to God. It didn't matter how hard the hike was and it didn't matter that my legs felt like they might fall off, because all I could think about was the beauty of God's creation and how much God loves our world.

– Maddie Moravek

Practice:

Go outside. Take a moment for a stillness. Look at the world God has made. Know God loves this world, and God loves you.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What is the message God is saying to you when you feel overwhelmed?
2. If we slow our lives down, what can we hear God saying to us?



2026 READING PLAN

week 12

Welcome to Week 12!

We are getting super close to Easter! However, before we get there, we have two more weeks of tough Holy Week readings ahead. I know this prolonged stretch of difficult readings is less than fun, but I also hope it is preparing us more and more for Easter. Another way to help prepare, is to sign up for our Seder Meal! This year we are offering a new Wednesday night Holy Week worship experience. We will have a Seder meal to us get into the context of Jesus' Last Supper. We will look at both Passover and the first communion. It will be fun, experiential, and meaningful.

To help us with our readings this week, we pulled in an expert. For Tuesday and Friday, we get to hear from the one and only Dr. Bill Morgan! Dr. Morgan is incredibly thoughtful, and the most well-read person I know. I hope you enjoy hearing from him!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

Monday, March 23: Luke 21: 20-28 — Destruction of Jerusalem & the Son of Man

Tuesday, March 24: Luke 21: 29-38 — Be Watchful

Wednesday, March 25: Luke 22: 1-23 — Judas Agrees to Betray & The Last Supper

Thursday, March 26: Luke 22: 24-46 — Servant Leadership & Jesus Prays on the Mount

Friday, March 27: Luke 22: 47-62 — Jesus Arrested, Peter Denies Him

WEEK 12 | MONDAY

Luke 21: 20-28

Word of the Week: Oros

The Greek word for mountain in Luke 21:21 is ὄρος (oros). This noun refers to a mountain, mount, or hill. In the context of Luke 21:20-28, which discusses the destruction of Jerusalem, the verse commands those in Judea to flee to the mountains (orē).

Reflection:

What a way to start Spring Break, everyone! As you can tell by this passage we are in the midst of Holy week. The urgency with which Jesus talks to His disciples becomes stronger and stronger. As someone who has been both a pregnant and nursing mother, I recall it as a time when I felt my most vulnerable. It's a time in your life when you HAVE to rely on other people, and I wonder if it's a reminder from Jesus to his disciples to look out for those who are vulnerable. Jesus tells them when this chaos happens to flee to the mountains. I love the imagery of the mountain, because it does several things. It removes you from the thick of the conflict, cares, and burdens. It gives you a bird's eye view of what is happening and can give you clarity. I actually like that this passage falls on Spring Break for this reason. Maybe you are in the mountains this week, or maybe someplace with an equally impressive view. Maybe you are at home and can find some time to go out into nature or someplace with a view. It can change our perspective on things can't it?

-Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to a song by Hillsong called Highlands (Song of Ascent). How does a retreat or a different perspective give us clarity? As we inch closer and closer to Holy week, what kind of perspective shift do you need? Has something been a stress or a burden that you can ask God for some respite from?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Where are you this week?
2. What is it like to be dependent on someone?



WEEK 12 | TUESDAY

Luke 21: 29-38

Reflection:

Holy Watching While Daily Serving

Jesus is spending his fateful last week in Jerusalem. That's the week we call 'Holy Week'...though it probably did not feel all the fun or holy to the people then. There was much upheaval in their lives at the time. Soon Jesus will be arrested, then the confusion of the cross. Anyone familiar with upheaval and confusion in your life and world?

Jerusalem days before his arrest, as during his travel ministry, Jesus teaches people about having lives worth living and dying for...About paying attention to signs of God's Presence, God's Kingdom reality breaking into their lives. Frightful things were happening then, and frightful things happen now in our world. There can be fear that some sort of end of the world is coming – the big world, or our little worlds. Jesus encourages: "Take care that your hearts aren't dulled by...the anxieties of day-to-day life."

Luke 21, Mark 13, and Matthew 24 are sometimes called 'a little apocalypse or revelation', mystical material like the book of Daniel and Revelation. Such comes in times of great stress and persecution to comfort the oppressed and confound the oppressors.

Highly symbolic, sometimes scary, warnings of buildings falling, false leaders appearing, strange beasts described, cosmic events in the sky, wars and rumors of wars, signs of God's acting in tumultuous history.

We could spend good time together studying, discussing these "apocalyptic/revelatory" passages. Takes a while to see it, but these strange words and images are actually intended to give courage not increase fear.

(Track down GETTING STRAIGHT ABOUT THE BIBLE by Horace Weaver.)

People have done a lot of pushups to grid out what defies a literal interpretation of all this. Here is a terrifically insufficient summary: "Though it may not look like it at times, God is in charge, God has our backs for eternity."

Years ago, Birmingham-Southern College Chaplain Don Shockley (who became my hero and cousin-in-law) called this trust 'divine-nonchalance.' This frees us from killing-fretting away our time trying to figure out the 'non-figure-out-able future' and gives us courage to fully live our now time with a measure of joy, taking care of one another on this dangerous, wonderful earth.

Not a one of us is exempt from a menu of anxieties, fears, griefs, and regrets. Here are some practices by which God channels beyond our own doing grace, peace and strength...

– Bill Morgan

Practice:

1. Wholly-Holy Breathing When stressed, take deep inhale and exhale breaths...in through the nose, hold a few seconds, and out through the mouth. At least ten. The gift calm begins to appear. Also, there is restorative holy breathing that can show up in worship together.

2. Bible Ruminating On Our Own, Even Better Together

+Micah 6.8: "What does the Lord require of us but to do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God."

+Matthew 25. 31-46: 'How you treat people who are beat up by life is the same as doing it to me.'

(Morgan Translation)

+Romans 8.31-39: 'I am convinced nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

3. Caring Action focuses us beyond ourselves on others.

Connect with people you know going through hard times... Tutor...deliver food... Discover how your work can help people with their lives...Join in some action, speak up for people being mistreated in our world.

Jesus' anxiety zapping peace is not anesthesia...

But courage to care.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

Have you ever tried Wholly Breathing?

What is it like to reset through breathing?



WEEK 12 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 22: 1-23

Reflection:

There are so many more details that I want added to this passage of scripture and yet it is so much richer because it is so simple. I would LOVE to know the thoughts and discussions that the disciples had about Judas and his motivations for his betrayal in the years that followed this event. It has to be one of the most theologically analyzed events in the New Testament. Why did Judas do this to his friend?

Was money the motivation? Was it that Jesus wasn't the leader he was expecting? When I read this passage of scripture, a song by the Bleachers comes to my mind called Don't Take the Money. When talking about this song's origin, Bleachers front man Jack Antonoff talks about how that phrase has been a creative north star for him. Don't sell out. Don't take the easy path. And it's the phrase that I want to shout at Judas before he does something that can't be undone.

If you ever go to the Methodist Museum at Epworth-by-the-Sea on St. Simon's Island you will see a series of portraits that portray the Jesus and the disciples. The artist famously used the same model for both Jesus and Judas. It's an image that has stuck with me for many, many years, and I wonder if it is meant to make you feel the tension. The tension that all people have both the capability to save and to betray, to be faithful and to be faithless, to love and to despise. And as we enter into Holy week, this is it folks. This is where we take a long hard look at the condition of our hearts and ask God to illuminate the ways we have taken the easy road when we needed to take to hard. Our passage ends with something that may have been equally shocking, the last supper, our first communion. This year at Canterbury, we are trying something new. We will be having a seder meal to experience this in a way that Jesus's disciples may have experienced it. I would love it if you considered joining us for this experience next week.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

For today practice's, listen to the songs Highlands (Song of Ascent) by Hillsong and Don't Take the Money by Bleachers

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are your thoughts about today's passage of scripture? What emotions come to the surface when you read about the story of Judas?
2. Is there anything in your own heart that you need to bring before God? Have you ever experienced a seder meal? What meaning does communion have in your own life?



WEEK 12 | THURSDAY

Luke 22: 24-46

Reflection:

Tough reading today for Jesus' friends!

The disciples misunderstand Jesus' kingdom. Jesus tells Peter about the denials. After all of that, the disciples then fail to keep watch and fall asleep on Jesus while he prays... Since his friends are failing him, Jesus turns to God in prayer. We can learn a lot about prayer from this interaction. Jesus spent his entire life, purpose, and mission for these coming days. Everything in his world has led to this moment. Knowing this moment has finally arrived, Jesus is sweating drops of blood. In this moment, his prayer does not look how I might think.

"Father, if its your will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will must be done."

For me, this prayer displays the depth of Jesus' relationship with God. Jesus expresses his desire and fear, but never in a way that threatens his mission. He can come to God spill his soul, and in return he was strengthened for the work ahead.

In seminary, I took a class on Spiritual Practices. My teacher, Dr. Winner, loved to talk about this exchange with Jesus and God and how it is a perfect example for our prayers. She compared it to this metaphor: "Imagine you are a parent of a boy in kindergarten. You notice your son has a crush on another student. You ask your son about the crush, but your son keeps denying it. Despite the denial, you are certain of the crush because of they way your son is behaving, talking, and going out of his way to be around his crush. One day, your son walks up to you and says, 'you are right I have a crush.' You, as the parent, did not learn anything knew. You were already certain about the crush. However, by your son coming to you and admitting the news, your relationship just grew exponentially. By this simple admission, your relationship grew in trust, grew in intimacy, and grew the potential for future sharing."

Jesus has this kind of relationship with God. Jesus bares his desire to have "this cup pass from me." Yet, Jesus also trusts God. He isn't asking for God to take him away from his situation so much as he is sharing his feelings of anxiety and fear. In response, God sends an angel to comfort and strengthen him. Judging from this exchange, God values hearing about our thoughts and feelings. God wants to know the desires of our heart. Let this prayer guide us in how we talk to God.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

REFRESH:

Practice this type of prayer this week. Take a minute or more to open up to God. Express your desires, your fears, your anxiety. Then, watch how your relationship can grow.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does Jesus' garden prayer mean to you?
2. Do our prayers look the same?
3. What does God want from our prayers?

WEEK 12 | FRIDAY

Luke 22: 47-62

Reflection:

More Than Our Worst Day

These verses are framed by Judas' betrayal of Jesus and Simon Peter's denial of knowing Jesus. For today, Simon Peter. Across the years, I have shared a mantra about SP: Sometimes Peter got it right. Sometimes Peter got it wrong. But Peter kept going on.

Fishermen Simon and brother Andrew were first disciples Jesus called. Good start!

Simon was a strong, outspoken guy. When others are unsure who Jesus is, Simon got it:

"You are the Messiah." Jesus begins calling him Peter – 'Petros', 'Rock'. 'On this rock, I will build my church.' Peter got it right.

Soon, when Jesus tells how his radical inclusive love will get him killed, Peter sputters that can never happen. Jesus rebukes Peter with withering words. Peter got it wrong.

The strong rock became a slippery rock. Not for the last time, Jesus gets Peter back on track. So Peter keeps going.

In Gethsemane as things are closing in on Jesus, Peter booms he will never let Jesus down. Though Peter intends to get it right, Jesus says Peter will deny him three times.

Here we come into the Netflix series of Peter's life. Scary hours after Jesus is arrested, Peter denies he knows Jesus three times. Worst day of his life. Peter gets it so wrong.

But that's not all!!! John 21. Days later. Peter recognizes risen Jesus. Jesus restores Peter. Sends him to 'tend my sheep' care for people. Gets to go on. Gets it right for a while.

Peter thinks Jesus is only for some, not all people. Gets it wrong again. Then there is a great vision. Acts 10. Peter sees God's love is for all people – then champions inclusion of foreigners. Peter goes on, gets it right even to a cross that finally awaits him. Peter got it right for eternity.

JUST MERCY is Bryan Stevenson's book (also movie) about his efforts to champion people wrongly imprisoned, or who got into trouble early in life and deserve another chance.

He makes a simple but profound statement: "Each of us is worth much more than the worst thing we've ever done."

– Bill Morgan

Practice:

Big ways, small ways, we have regrets for times our worst won out over our best that come to our minds and hearts

Look at ourselves in the mirror, or picture those who let us down, and thank God that ...every one of us is worth much more than the worst thing we've ever done.

Extra Credit: Does this apply to the Judas?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. When was a time you got it wrong?
2. When you got it wrong, who in your life showed you grace?



2026 READING PLAN

week 13

Welcome to Week 13!

We have finally made it to Holy Week. This is the toughest week in our Church calendar. Jesus goes through so many hard times. This week most clearly displays Jesus' amazing love for us. As we go through these hard readings, may we all be reminded this is what God's love looks like. To remind us of God's love, we have the readings this week as well as many other church options. Come join us for all of it as we step into Holy Week.

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

Monday, March 30: Luke 22: 63-71 — Jesus Mocked and Tried

Tuesday, March 31: Luke 23: 1-25 — Jesus Before Pilate and Herod

Wednesday, April 1: Luke 23: 26-43 — The Crucifixion Begins

Thursday, April 2 (Maundy Thursday): Luke 23: 44-49 — The Death of Jesus

Friday, April 3 (Good Friday): Luke 23: 50-56 The Burial of Jesus

WEEK 13 | MONDAY

Luke 22: 63-71

Word of the Week: Martyria

The Greek word for “testify” or “bear witness” in the Gospel of Luke 22:71 is μαρτυρία (martyria). This noun means testimony, witness, or evidence given to establish truth. In this passage, the religious leaders believe they no longer need additional witnesses because Jesus’ own words have become the “evidence” against Him.

Reflection:

This is one of the most painful scenes in all of Holy Week. Jesus is mocked, beaten, blindfolded, and ridiculed. The very people who should have recognized Him—religious leaders, teachers of the law—are the ones who reject Him.

And yet, what is striking is not just the cruelty... it’s the silence.

Jesus does not defend Himself the way we might expect. He doesn’t argue. He doesn’t plead His case. He simply stands in truth.

“From now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the power of God.”

It’s as if Jesus is saying: You may not see clearly now—but the truth is already established.

There is something deeply unsettling about this passage because it reveals how easy it is for people to be absolutely certain—and completely wrong. The leaders are convinced they are defending God, when in reality, they are rejecting God standing right in front of them.

And if we’re honest, that’s not just their story—it’s ours too.

How often do we rush to judgment?

How often do we decide we already know enough?

How often do we stop listening... because we’re certain we’re right?

Jesus stands there—absorbing violence, holding truth, refusing to become what they are. And in doing so, He shows us a different kind of strength.

Not loud.

Not defensive.

But grounded. Steady. Unshaken.

A strength rooted in knowing who He is—and whose He is.

– Keith Thompson

Practice:

Today, resist the urge to defend yourself too quickly.

- Pause before responding in a tense moment
- Listen longer than feels comfortable
- Ask, “What truth might I be missing here?”

Spend a few quiet moments in prayer, imagining Jesus standing calmly in the midst of accusation. What would it look like for you to carry that same grounded presence into your day?



WEEK 13 | TUESDAY

Luke 23: 1-25

Reflection:

A very tough read today... as all of our readers are this week.

I wonder so much about what Jesus was going through. I wonder how it must have felt to be passed around by Pilate and Herod... I wonder how it must have felt to be questioned for all the good Jesus had done... I wonder how it must have felt to hear people shout "crucify him"... I wonder how it must have felt to go through this entire process and still be loving to all...

A couple of things to note... Neither Pilate nor Herod wanted to crucify Jesus. Neither man felt threatened by him. Neither man wanted to put him on the cross. It was the Israelites, Jesus' own people, who demanded the cross. The chief priests and the scribes were more hostile than Pilate or Herod. It can be a scary warning that the idea of who we want Jesus to be can get in the way of who Jesus actually is.

Then, when Pilate offers the people one last chance to choose Jesus... They chose Barabbas...

I can't imagine what Jesus must've been thinking and feeling through all these events... I also can't imagine the extent of Jesus' love for us. Jesus stayed peaceful. Jesus stayed loving. This is our best example of God's love made manifest. God loved us so much, that Jesus was willing to do this for us.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Lets keep this week's practice simple. Let's thank Jesus for his love.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What is it like to be loved this much by Jesus?
2. How does love like this affect us?



WEEK 13 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 23: 26-43

Reflection:

Most of us know the story, or at least, the high points. Jesus is arrested and tried by a court of popular opinion. “Give us Jesus Barrabas,” the crowd cries. “We would rather have the leader of insurrection and murder free than Jesus of Nazareth.” What good can come out of Nazareth, anyway?

Jesus is sentenced to death. Not just death, but a terrible death on a cross – a tool of capital punishment and humiliation. There are hammers, nails, jokes, and snickering.

Sometimes, the high points leave out some of the most subtle, yet poignant, parts of the story like the nobody from the countryside. Luke tells us there was a man named Simon in the crowds. Likely, he was there like all of the other Jewish faithful celebrating the Passover. The news of Jesus’ trial and procession to the hill where all could witness the spectacle of his death was likely all the city could talk about.

Simon likely wanted to see what all of the talk was about. Who could blame him? It was after all, quite the spectacle. I can only imagine his shock when they pulled him from his place squeezed against all of the other rubber necks along the cobble stoned street to carry the large, solid wood beam that Jesus struggled to keep balanced on his shoulders in his mental and physical exhaustion.

We aren’t given any details about the exchange other than that Jesus’ crosswise put on Simon’s back and he was made to carry it behind Jesus as he walked the rest of the way to the place where he would die.

I can’t think of these last hours of Jesus’ life without thinking about Tim O’Brien’s book, *The Things They Carried*. O’Brien catalogues the heavy weight of the Vietnam war from the physical – matches, morphine, raffles, and M&Ms – to the intangible – guilt, fear, love, longing, memory, and grief.

“They carried all they could bare, and then some, including a silent awe for the terrible power of the things they carried,” O’Brien writes. I’m not sure if Simon from Cyrene felt the exact weight of what he was carrying from the outer streets of Jerusalem to the hill on the outskirts of the city. But, surely, he had to feel some of it.

Even if Simon did not know much about Jesus of Nazareth, even if he had not witnessed the healings and miracles Jesus performed, even if he had never heard one of Jesus’ teachings about who God is and how God longs for all people to have life and life to its fullest (John 10:10), Simon carried all that he could bare, and then some.

In the midst of holy week, we are given an unexpected invitation whether we willingly choose it or it is thrusts upon us. There is weight that is ours to bare. For some of us, it is a weight we did not choose – grief, sickness, fear of our well being or that of someone we love. For some of us, it is a weight we gladly hold for those most dear and near to us inner lives. Whatever the case, the things we carry are part of our following Jesus – the one who carried our burdens, died our death, and will raise in a few days time to life everlasting.

– Tori Hastings

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What are you carrying that someone could help ease?
2. How can you help ease someone who is carrying a heavy load?



WEEK 13 | THURSDAY

Luke 23: 44-49

Reflection:

Devotional thought: As I am writing this devotional for the day, I am sitting in the backstage area of Canterbury Center. We recently did a big deep clean of some of the closet spaces backstage and are rehoming some items that haven't been used in a long time. Two of the items being donated to Camp Sumatanga are these two enormous crosses. They are waiting to be picked up backstage side by side. One cross is simple, it's wooden and it has no embellishments. The other is beautiful, with ornate tiles and a variety of colors. I'm struck by the thought that Luke tells us that there are two distinct groups of people present. The ones who knew Jesus and the ones who did not. I wonder if these two groups of people saw different things. I wonder if the cross appeared differently to each of them.

I recently was a part of a funeral service that Bill Morgan performed. He spoke about how when someone passes away, something happens called a "second knowing". We get the chance to look back on the life of our loved one and see how all of the beautiful moments together get painted into a picture that we didn't get to see when they were with us. I wonder if this is what the second group, the people who KNEW Jesus, felt after the fact. That maybe when they looked at the cross they saw life and faith and love. Maybe they didn't see something stark and brutal, but something beautiful.

Tomorrow we will have our Good Friday services at noon and at 6pm. I want to invite you to join us as we contemplate what the cross means for us and our lives together. We will experience the dark together so that the light and hope of Easter means that much more.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH:

Find a place to read and pray today where a cross is visible. Maybe you have your own, maybe you come to the chapel at church (or even backstage at Canterbury Center). I also want to invite you to listen to a song by 100 Portraits called Around My Neck. In the song, the singer is asking herself questions about the cross.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What do you see when you look at the cross?
2. What does it mean to you?
3. What emotions are stirred as you contemplate what the cross means?



WEEK 13 | FRIDAY

Luke 23: 50-56

Reflection:

Today is Good Friday... in some traditions today is called Holy Friday or Fateful Friday. It is the day we remember Jesus on the cross. Today is the greatest sacrifice in history. A day like today invites us into reflection about who Jesus is, how much Jesus loves all of us, and the cost of that love. I pray you find time to sit with Jesus, talk with him, and if possible find a Good Friday service. Today is an emotional day, but also its an important day in understanding who Jesus is.

Our reading for today, takes us past the main events of Good Friday and introduces us to a lesser known disciple, Joseph of Arimathea. Joseph of Arimathea is one of the few characters mentioned in all four gospels. We don't know much about him other than he was a member of the Sanhedrin. It gives me a little hope to know that Jesus had at least one ally during his final days. During all the craziness of Holy Week, Jesus had at least one sympathetic friend listening and watching the events unfold. Joseph plays only this small role of preparing Jesus for burial. However, this must've meant a lot to God because he is included in all of our gospels.

Isaiah 53:9 says, "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth."

Bible teachers like to point at this verse in relationship with Joseph of Arimathea as a fulfillment of prophecy. Jesus who was innocent was sent to the grave, and not just any grave, but a grave with the rich. Joseph of Arimathea is presumably wealthy and gave Jesus an unused tomb fulfilling Isaiah's words.

After Joseph prepares Jesus' body, some of the women disciples follow him. It seems these few women either knew to wait and hope for something, or they loved Jesus so much they wouldn't leave his side. It makes me wonder, where are the disciples? Jesus' closest friends are no where to be found during all this. Were they scared? Were they unable to visit? Were they in danger? Why weren't they the ones requesting to bury Jesus? Where is Jesus' family? His parents? Did no one else stay with him? I dont know the answers to any of these questions, but I do know that Jesus wasn't alone. Joseph of Arimathea and the women disciples made sure to look after Jesus. Much like the Bible promises us that we are never alone, it is comforting to know Jesus had friends with him even at the end.

Who are the friends who have stayed with you in the worst of times? Who are the people who have shown up unexpected to offer you the gift of presence? Maybe one of the most faithful things we can do this Good Friday, is to reach out and thank those people for being with us.

– Hill Carmichael



2026 READING PLAN

week 14

Welcome to Week 14!

This is our last and final week of our Luke Reading Plan! THANK YOU for journeying with us through all the ups and downs of Jesus' life and ministry. We have made it through Lent, and now we are in Eastertide which means we are in full celebration of Easter!! This week's reading is much more fun than the previous few weeks, and also a bit mysterious. The resurrected Jesus can be so strange, but at the same time so wonderful.

Starting next week, the reading plan will continue with Galatians! Natalie and I thought that after spending the last few months studying the life of Jesus, that now it makes sense to shift our focus on a letter that teaches us how to be the Church. We hope you will continue with the reading plan as we move to a part of the New Testament. Thank you for making this journey with us!!

Blessings,
Matthew Montgomery

A look at the Week Ahead:

Monday, April 6: Luke 24:1–12 — The Resurrection

Tuesday, April 7: Luke 24:13–27 — The Road to Emmaus (Part 1)

Wednesday, April 8: Luke 24:28–35 — The Road to Emmaus (Part 2)

Thursday, April 9: Luke 24:36–49 — Jesus Appears to His Disciples

Friday, April 10: Luke 24:50–53 — The Ascension

WEEK 14 | MONDAY

Luke 24: 1-12

Word of the Week: Light

Welcome to the Good News!! It's Eastertide and we get to celebrate!!

Our passage this morning makes it clear that the period of darkness is over. Light is back, and light appears in three ways:

First, our story begins at dawn. We have spent multiple days in both physical and metaphorical darkness from Good Friday until now. With the dawn of the new week, light has returned!

Second, two men in bright dazzling clothes appear in our story. We don't know much about these "men." Other gospels claim an angel or sometimes multiple angels appeared, but Luke calls them men. These men are wearing dazzling clothes. Light has returned and it is back with intensity. Even ordinary things like clothes, are testimony to the change Jesus has brought.

Third, we receive the light of revelation. The "men" share and entrust the Good News to the women at the empty tomb. Jesus is not here. Jesus is risen just as he foretold. The women at the tomb are entrusted to share and preach the first ever Easter sermon. Jesus has defeated sin and death. Jesus is resurrected!

It is interesting that Luke makes special notice that the women believed the Good News immediately, but the disciples were skeptical. I wonder if there is also a sermon on how God loves to share the Good News often from unexpected places?

This Eastertide may we live in the light of the Good News. Jesus is resurrected. Jesus is with us. Just as Jesus was named Emmanuel in the beginning of the gospel, so now he is our permanent Emmanuel. God with us. God with us in the dark. God with us in the light. God with us always. Let us live in the light of the Good News!

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Take a moment to flip on a light switch. May it be a reminder of the light of Jesus. It may not always be on, but it is easily accessed and always at the ready.

Spend a few quiet moments in prayer, imagining Jesus standing calmly in the midst of accusation. What would it look like for you to carry that same grounded presence into your day?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does light mean to you?
2. How does Jesus want us to share light?
3. Who needs some extra light in their life?



WEEK 14 | TUESDAY

Luke 24: 13-27

Reflection:

I love today's passage of Scripture. The biggest miracle in the history of the world has just occurred and one of the first things we see people struggling with is doubt. What a mystery faith can be! What does that say about us? Is doubt not only inevitable but important to our own faith journeys? Jesus appears to be frustrated that Cleopas and his friend are slow to believe. And yet, he is extraordinarily patient and continues on the journey with them, explaining things the entire way.

One of my favorite authors, Thomas Merton, who was an American Trappist monk, is quoted as saying "Faith means doubt. Faith is not the suppression of doubt. It is the overcoming of doubt, and you overcome doubt by going through it". He also says "the man of faith who has never experienced doubt is not a man of faith".

Isn't it comforting that Jesus is literally walking with these men through their own doubts? There is a song that I absolutely adore called Jesus I Have My Doubts by Jon Foreman. It is rare to find a song that expresses doubts about faith without offering a resolution. That is where our scripture ends today, without the men finding a resolution.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

I want to invite you to listen to this song and explore your own doubts. Have you ever associated doubt with holiness? Take some time to write and pray, asking in faith that God will walk with you through it.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. What does it mean to live a resurrected life and yet struggle with doubt?
2. How does that help you grow in your faith?



WEEK 14 | WEDNESDAY

Luke 24: 28-35

Reflection:

Today, we are continuing the Walk to Emmaus story! This is one of my favorite stories in all of Luke and in all of the Bible.

For our two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they have had a crazy week. They were witnesses to all the events of Holy Week. They watched Jesus enter into Jerusalem on the donkey, they watched Jesus flipping tables and clearing the temple, they watched Jesus preach and gather large crowds, they watched all the momentum building up to something big, then they watched it all come to an abrupt end when Jesus was arrested and put on the cross... So with no Jesus anymore... they leave Jerusalem. We don't know why they leave. Maybe Jerusalem feels unsafe for Jesus followers? Maybe without Jesus, they as disciples, are no longer employed? Or maybe they no longer have any hopes or dreams? With nowhere else to go, they take the road to Emmaus.

The Gospel of Luke tells us that Emmaus is 7 miles outside of Jerusalem, but funny enough no one really knows where Emmaus actually is. Bible scholars and theologians can point to 3 towns that are possibilities, but no one really knows for sure. Perhaps it is one of those three towns, or perhaps it is as if these two disciples don't know where they are going. They lost Jesus and now they are well and truly lost themselves. Personally, I love that no one knows where Emmaus is. I like the idea that Emmaus is a road to nowhere, and that this road doesn't just describe the disciple's physical location, but it also describes the disciple's state of being. These two lost disciples is who Jesus decides to appear to first.

Jesus is so odd to me. In our story today, Jesus has just left his tomb. He's been gone for 3 days and now he's back. He could've had a full agenda of places to be, people to shock, and could've been running around telling everyone the good news. Jesus has completed his mission. He was dead and rose again, he defeated death and sin, he saved all of humanity and the whole world needs to know! But what does he do with his very first act of new life? He doesn't go to the 12 disciples. He doesn't go to Herod to brag. He doesn't go to the pharisees. He doesn't go yelling in the streets. Instead, he gets on the road to Emmaus to spend a FULL day walking and talking with two lost disciples. Even stranger, he doesn't let the disciples recognize him. He doesn't reprimand them for leaving. He doesn't ask why they are being unfaithful. They just walk and talk the day away.

This is who Jesus is. Jesus looks for the lost and brings them home. When we feel lost, Jesus comes chasing. We may not always recognize Jesus in the moment, but maybe that is the gift of hindsight. After the disciples realize it is Jesus, they decide to return to Jerusalem. Jesus comes to comfort us when we are lost, but Jesus also gives us assignments. They go back to Jerusalem where I can only imagine they begin the work of helping other lost disciples. I believe that is what Jesus does for us as well. Jesus comforts us, and then gives us purpose.

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Reflect on a time you were lost either physically or emotionally. Who showed up during that time? Was Jesus involved?

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. Who do you know that is feeling lost?
2. When has Jesus shown up while you felt lost?
3. Why is it that a risen Jesus always seems to be unrecognizable?



WEEK 14 | THURSDAY

Luke 24: 36-49

Reflection:

Today we get to see Jesus's last interaction with his disciples before the Ascension. I love that the first thing he says to them is "Peace be with you." He knows of their doubts, their fears, their worries, and shares peace. Wow.

There is a song that I listened to over and over again during the pandemic called By My Side by North Point Worship. In the song, Emily Harrison sings about how Christ is always near, no matter what is happening in our lives or in the world. I would go on long walks every morning that year and listen to this song on repeat. I can't help but think of this song when I read this passage of scripture.

– Natalie Moon

Practice:

REFRESH:

I want to invite you to listen to this song and explore areas of your life that you could use some peace. As it is refresh Thursday, maybe go on a walk, move around, or listen to this song and breathe in the peace that passes all understanding that is offered to us through Christ.

Questions to ask friends, family, strangers, and yourself:

1. How have you received peace in the past?
2. How would fully realizing the resurrected life Jesus offers us give you peace today?



WEEK 14 | FRIDAY

Luke 24: 50-53

Reflection:

We have made it! This is the end of Luke. I hope you are celebrating this incredible journey! Currently, I am writing this reflection during Holy Week. Throughout Holy Week, there are so many uplifting moments and so many somber moments. In many ways, I think that reflects the book of Luke as a whole. Reading the Gospel of Luke from start to finish, has made us sit with the words of Jesus that are both uplifting and also uncomfortable. There were full weeks where I was wrestling with Jesus' words, but also full weeks where I was moved by his compassion and love for people. I hope you have had similar experiences in these last few months.

Before we finish Luke, we encounter these last few verses. Jesus ascends into heaven, and the disciples are left once again to figure things out. When Jesus was crucified, the disciples forgot their mission. They returned to fishing. They hid behind closed doors. Some, like our friends from earlier this week, left Jerusalem and hit the road to Emmaus. This time when Jesus leaves, the disciples have a different response. They start with worship, and then they return to Jerusalem to do the work Jesus assigned to them. May it always be so for us, that after we finish worshipping on Sundays, we return to the work of being the Church Jesus calls us to be. May our worship and the reading of this Gospel of Luke, propel us into the work of Jesus. Our theme for the Spring and for Lent has been "Be Like Jesus."

At the beginning of this reading plan, we offered a simple formula. We believe that:

More time with in scripture = More time with God
More time with God = Becoming more like Jesus
Becoming more like Jesus = Transforming our community

I pray that formula was proven true in your life.

Thank you for making this journey!

– Matthew Montgomery

Practice:

Go and be like Jesus.