

SEPTEMBER 2017

TODAY IN THE WORD™



*My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.*

John 10:27

SEARCHING FOR JESUS: The Gospel of John

A devotional from



MOODY
GLOBAL MINISTRIES™

TODAY WITH DR. PAUL NYQUIST

President of Moody Global Ministries

Following Jesus



When we talk about walking where Jesus walked, we are usually referring to the places where Jesus held His public ministry, which was

mostly in Galilee. In Israel, there are two specific places where you can actually trace His steps. The first is the southern steps leading into the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. The original steps are still there, and Jesus undoubtedly walked those same steps into the temple.

The second is the newly excavated city of Magdala on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee. The ruins of the first-century synagogue have been excavated. We know Jesus was in that city, and we can reasonably assume He went to the synagogue. In each of those two areas, you can truly say you “walked where Jesus walked.”

My favorite place in Israel, though, is the Sea of Galilee, and when you go in a boat you get a feel for Jesus’ ministry in the Gospels. From that vantage point, you realize how much of His three-year ministry took place in a small piece of geography. The lone city that remains, Tiberias, is larger than it was in the first century, but the landscape of the sea and nearby hills remains very much like it would have been in Jesus’ day.

While I would highly recommend a trip to Israel, I am thankful that we don’t have to travel there to find Jesus. He is clearly revealed to us in the pages of His Word. In the introduction to his Gospel, John writes, “The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth” (1:14).

John says that while no one has ever seen God, we are given an up-close record of “the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father” (1:18). John’s Gospel emphasizes the deity of Jesus, reminding us throughout that we are able to know the Savior and Messiah. And through faith in Him, we can also be in a personal relationship with God (20:31).

John lets us witness Jesus’ interaction with individuals. We walk in Jesus’ footsteps, seeing His humanity, hunger, tiredness, sorrow, and death. And, at the end of John’s Gospel, we learn that Jesus, who is fully God and fully man, has been resurrected and offers this life to all His followers.

John’s Gospel allows us to walk where Jesus walked, and to find Jesus, no matter where we are. ■

THEOLOGY MATTERS

by Dr. John Koessler

The Eternal Word

Each year at Christmas we celebrate Christ's birth, but we do not celebrate His beginning. According to John 1:1, in the beginning Jesus Christ already existed as God. He was with God and He was God. In this verse John speaks of Jesus as the eternal Word, employing a title that portrays Jesus as one who reveals God. John makes it clear that Jesus not only revealed God, He Himself was God. This Jesus who already existed "in the beginning" was the one who made all things (John 1:2).

Jesus came not only speaking the words of God but also embodying all that the Scriptures have to say about God. This is why the writer of Hebrews describes Jesus as God's last word about Himself: "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in Heaven" (Heb. 1:3). Jesus is both our Creator and our Redeemer, things that only God can do.

When John says that the Word was "with" God in John 1:1, He differentiates Jesus as God the Son from the Father, who is also God. Jesus is God, but He is not the Father. Jesus is God in the

flesh, but He is not the Father simply appearing to take a human form. Jesus is one with the Father in glory and in substance, but He is not identical with the Father (John 10:30). The unique relationship that Jesus has with the Father is expressed in Scripture by the phrase "only begotten Son" or "one and only Son" in John 1:14. This theological language emphasizes the uniqueness of Christ in His nature and in His relationship with the Father.

God exists in a unity of three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus is the eternal Word, and He is one with the Father though He is not the Father. Arius, a heretic in the fourth century whose teachings continue to be reflected today in groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, believed that Jesus was a created being who was inferior to the Father. Speaking of Jesus, Arius declared, "There was when he was not." The Gospel of John teaches otherwise. The prologue to John's Gospel boldly declares that Jesus has always existed as God. There was never a time when He was not. ■

FOR FURTHER STUDY

To learn more about the uniqueness of Christ, read *The Deity of Christ* by John MacArthur (Moody Publishers).

TODAY AT MOODY

Talking about Jesus with Moody Radio's Janet Parshall

Most of us fear rejection. Often, that fear keeps us from telling others about Jesus. But Moody Radio host Janet Parshall insists that “going and telling” is not an option for believers. Rico Tice, associate minister at All Souls Church in London, recently joined Janet on *In the Market with Janet Parshall* to talk about how to share your faith.

Why does it seem so difficult, in today's culture, to share the gospel?

“Twenty-five years ago, I could have handed someone a pamphlet with four spiritual laws, and the opportunity was probably greater than it is now,” Janet says. “There was, culturally, at least, the idea that there was a transcendent truth.”

Rico agrees: “There is not the general acceptance that Christianity is the right thing to do. But in a way that is good. It has shown that being a Christian is not the same as just being a good person.”

How do we witness to friends we've known a long time?

“God brings across our path both the friends we've known for years and the stranger who we meet on the street,”

Rico says. “He organizes our times and places. So that means whoever we're in contact with—whether it's the person who sits opposite us on the bus or the person we went to school with and are still in touch 30 years later—God has put them in our life and we ought to keep speaking to them about Jesus.”

How do we not take rejection personally?

Sometimes we are more concerned about delivering the message than with the person. People know whether or not we care for them. “The problem in our individualistic culture is that we may be looking to say something and not really looking to serve them,” Rico says. “Do I remember their name? Their children's names? Am I interested enough in their life? We must be servants for Jesus' sake. Keep looking to their needs, and keep praying and looking for the courage and opportunity to speak.”

To listen to this entire program and other past broadcasts of *In the Market with Janet Parshall*, go to www.moodyradio.org. This program originally aired on March 16, 2017. ■

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TODAY IN THE WORD™

Searching for Jesus: The Gospel of John

Who is Jesus? The Gospel of John, written by “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (21:20), gives us the answer. John presents Jesus as the eternal Word, the divine Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the King of Israel. He is the Savior of the world, Lord and God.

As we study the Gospel of John this month, we'll see that Jesus inspired a wide range of responses and emotions in people. One anecdote in John 12 stands out: a group of nameless people, described as “some Greeks,” actively sought Him. They came to the apostle Philip with a request: “We would like to see Jesus” (v. 21). A few people left everything to follow Him when He called; some hated Him; others were interested at first but then found His teaching too hard and left. Throughout the Gospel, we see that different people had different ideas of who Jesus is.

How do we answer this question today? The answer changes everything—it's a matter of life or death, freedom with God or captivity to sin, light or darkness. We hope this month's study will give you a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what it means to have faith in Him. We pray you will continue to study His Word diligently and, like the Greeks, seek Him with perseverance and hope. ■

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FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER

1

*The Word became flesh and
made his dwelling among us.*

John 1:14

Watch What I Do

When former Chicago mayor Jane Byrne was concerned about violence in the city's housing projects, she did a surprising thing: she moved into one of them. In 1981, she lived for twenty days in an apartment in Cabrini Green. While her action sparked controversy, her decision to live among the poorest citizens of Chicago also drew needed attention to a long-neglected neighborhood.

The Gospel of John begins by focusing on how God came to dwell among us. John takes us to the beginning—not just when Jesus was born on Earth but all the way back to the beginning of time. The Son of God did not begin to exist at His physical birth; He was present at the Creation: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (v. 1). John stakes a claim: Jesus is God Himself. Jesus coexisted with His Father from the beginning (v. 3).

God's people had been looking forward to the arrival of the Messiah who would fulfill the promises made to Abraham and David (see Gen. 12:1–3; 2 Sam. 7:8–16). Now God had come to them directly in the person of His Son, Jesus. John the Baptist was sent ahead as a messenger to announce the arrival of the Messiah (v. 6).

Even though God was made flesh and dwelt among us, the “world did not recognize him” (v. 10). How could they have missed the One for whom they had been searching? What disappointment!

But this opening passage also holds great promise for those who receive Jesus, “to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (v. 12). The Gospel of John is about searching for and finding the Savior.

APPLY THE WORD

As we begin our study of John's Gospel this month, ask God to reveal His Son to you in a fresh way. Pray for people you know who are searching for a Savior, that they will believe in the name of Jesus. And thank the Lord for His willingness to dwell among us so that we could have salvation and a relationship with God through Christ.

PRAY WITH US

As we start a new month of Bible study with *Today in the Word*, ask the Lord to lead us as a praying community of friends. Today, pray for our faculty from the Theology department: Michael McDuffee, David Finkbeiner, Bryan Litfin, John Clark, and Kevin Zuber.

*Look, the Lamb of God, who
takes away the sin of the world!*

John 1:29

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER

2

Mistaken Identity

Children are usually taught that Thomas Edison invented the light bulb. But did he? In fact, many inventors worked on various types of lamps, including Englishman Humphrey Davy who illuminated a home in 1806. Davy produced a lamp by creating spark between two charcoal rods. Who was the true inventor?

In today's passage we see confusion over the identity and authority of Jesus and John the Baptist. Who is the true Messiah? John the Baptist was attracting the attention of both the public and the religious leaders, who sent a committee to investigate who he really was. John was ready with a clear answer: "I am not the Messiah" (v. 20).

But if John was not the Messiah, then who was he? John answered his interlocutors, explaining both who he was and why he was sent. Like the prophets, John had been given

a message from God to His people: "Make straight the way for the Lord" (v. 23; see Isa. 40:3). John made it perfectly clear that he was not the main attraction but rather the one who was announcing that the Messiah was soon to arrive.

In keeping with the religious practice of Judaism at that time, John baptized those who followed him with water, signifying their repentance and commitment to holiness. But only Jesus could baptize with the Holy Spirit, offering the forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation (v. 33). And only Jesus is the Son of God (v. 34).

John's task was important, but he accepted that he paled in comparison to his Savior. He was willing to point others who were searching for the Messiah to Jesus—even when that meant that his own followers left him to follow Christ (vv. 35–42).

APPLY THE WORD

Repeat aloud to yourself John's declaration: "I am not the Messiah" (v. 20). Sometimes we think that we are in charge of our own destiny. We become our own god, deciding what is best and what we should do next. But Jesus alone is God. We should be grateful to acknowledge Him as Lord and Savior and yield our lives to Him.

PRAY WITH US

As we continue to uphold in prayer our Theology professors, bring before the Lord today Gregg Quiggle, Marcus Johnson, Richard Weber, and Sanjay Merchant whose teaching provides Moody students with solid biblical foundation for ministry.

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER

3

He revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

John 2:11

The Real Thing

Magicians draw crowds when they pull a rabbit out of a hat or a gold coin from behind someone's ear. But even though they appear to do the impossible, we know there is a trick behind their illusions. The magic depends on shifting the attention of the audience to disguise ordinary actions that create the appearance of the impossible.

When Jesus turned water into wine, however, He was not just creating an illusion. He was indeed doing the impossible. At weddings, the best wine was traditionally presented first, so guests could fully appreciate its flavor. The cheaper wine would be presented later when it could pass unnoticed.

While Jesus was attending a wedding, the hosts ran out of wine, which would have been a deep embarrassment and social faux pas. Jesus' mother, Mary, turned to Him for help (v. 3). At first, Jesus resisted, saying it was not the time

to perform miracles before the public. But then He relented and asked servants to fill the stone jars with water. With that simple command, He produced the very best wine (v. 10).

Why did Jesus wait to perform the miracle? The following verses give us some insight. After the wedding, Jesus cleared the moneychangers from the temple. When asked about His authority to take such action, Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" (v. 19). People misunderstood, thinking that it was a boast about a miraculous building project. Many saw His miracles and believed. "But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people" (v. 24). He knew that some were able to see miracles but were not yet able to understand the identity of the One behind them, the Son of God. Only some would realize His true nature.

APPLY THE WORD

When you communicate God's message to others, they may not be ready to hear it. We must present the good news of Jesus Christ faithfully, but we cannot carry the burden of their understanding. We must trust the Holy Spirit to work, preparing them to hear and understand. Pray for your friends and loved ones today that God will open their ears.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. Tim Arens, VP and dean of Student Life, will appreciate your prayers as he and his team provide all the necessary support for our students to enhance the education process, so that students develop holistically in all areas of their lives.

*No one can see the kingdom
of God unless they are born again.*

John 3:3

MONDAY
SEPTEMBER

4

Can You Be Born Again?

Charles Spurgeon once said, “Being born again is a matter so mysterious, that human words cannot describe it.” He continues to explain this divine act: “Being born in a Christian land and being recognized as professing the Christian religion is of no avail whatever.”

Today’s passage focuses on a Pharisee by the name of Nicodemus, who came in search of Jesus. The Pharisees were a respected religious group within Judaism. Nicodemus would have kept the law and been deeply familiar with Scripture. Although he approached Jesus under the cover of night, he also spoke with a measure of respect, calling Him “Rabbi” (v. 2).

Nicodemus admitted that anyone who performed the miracles Jesus did must surely be from God. Nicodemus was not against Jesus, but neither did he fully understand that this was the Son

of God. When Jesus began to speak to Nicodemus of spiritual things, the Pharisee was confused. He asked, “How can someone be born again when they are old?” (v. 4).

This concept of being born again was unfamiliar to Nicodemus. This respected religious teacher could not understand spiritual things: “Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light” (v. 19). Nicodemus, for all his good works and religious knowledge, was still walking in darkness.

John 3:16 is often quoted to explain salvation, and Jesus clearly states what it means to be born again: belief in the Son of God. Trusting in the person and work of Jesus brings eternal life. This salvation was freely offered to Nicodemus and to each of us as well. God has miraculously made a way for us to be born again.

APPLY THE WORD

Being born again means more than saying that Christianity is a good idea; rather, it is accepting that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who died for your sins and was resurrected from the dead. This is the only way to have eternal life with God. If you haven’t trusted Christ, make today your spiritual birthday!

PRAY WITH US

Janet Gibbs, Jeremiah Hill, and Kathryn Passon are part of the Student Services team operating One-Stop Shop student information center. Praise God today for their professionalism and dedication as they address students’ questions and requests.

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER

5

Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

John 3:36

An Irresistible Offer

A recent study by the University of Michigan revealed that spending extended time on Facebook made people worried, lonely, and unhappy. It also increased feelings of discontent as users compared their lives to others. Says one researcher, “We want to learn about other people and have others learn about us—but through that very learning process we may start to resent others.”

Perhaps part of the human condition is the urge to compare ourselves to others to find how we measure up. In today’s passage, John the Baptist’s disciples expressed similar feelings of discontent and jealousy. They were growing increasingly upset because people were going to Jesus to be baptized instead of coming to John (v. 26). They viewed it as a competition.

John was quick to set them straight. He clarified his position in relation to

Jesus, saying, “I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him” (v. 28). He asserted that his decreasing popularity was exactly as it was meant to be: “He must become greater; I must become less” (v. 30).

John compared himself to an attendant at a wedding. He was never meant to be the main attraction. The attention and glory is all laid at the feet of Jesus. He was only the forerunner of the Messiah; he never claimed to be anything else.

What follows in verses 31 through 36 is a clear message about the identity of Jesus. John repeats that Jesus is not of this world but “comes from above” (v. 31). Unlike John the Baptist, Jesus was not testifying about what someone else had told Him but about what He Himself has seen firsthand. We are urged to believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God; do not resist this offer of grace (v. 36).

APPLY THE WORD

Our discontent, loneliness, anger, and jealousy usually stem from our focus on ourselves. Ask God today to turn your heart and mind away from yourself and toward your Savior. How can you point others to the One who is greater than you? Like John, we need to become less, so He will become more.

PRAY WITH US

Today we focus our prayers on our Student Accounts department: David Crail, Janet Mitchell, and Paulette Phillips. Would you uphold their interaction with students, that the Lord would give them good communication, grace, and understanding?

*Whoever drinks the water
I give them will never thirst.*

John 4:14

WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER

6

Identity Unmasked

A mask can be worn to disguise your identity, whether for entertainment, protection, or criminal reasons. In today's passage, we see masks removed as Jesus encounters a Samaritan woman at the community well.

Even a simple conversation between Jesus and this woman was out of the ordinary. In that culture, women did not speak casually with men. And Samaritans were despised by the Jews, a fact she acknowledged: "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (v. 9).

As they spoke, Jesus revealed something about Himself. His identity was significant, and He had something much greater to offer her than ordinary water. He could give her "living water" (v. 10). The woman was perplexed. She mentioned some obvious obstacles, such as the deep well and His lack of a bucket. How and where would He get

this living water? In response, Jesus revealed just a bit more, explaining that living water does not satisfy temporal thirst but rather brings eternal life. The woman was now convinced: "Give me this water" (v. 15).

Jesus' reply revealed that He saw through her mask of excuses and disguises. "Go, call your husband" (v. 16). Jesus knew she had no husband and that her past was cluttered with broken relationships. He knew that she was someone in desperate need of the truth He alone could offer.

While His physical body needed a drink of water from Jacob's well, the Samaritan woman needed a drink of eternal water to quench her heart's thirst. Jesus, the Messiah, revealed His true identity to her. He was not just an unusual Jewish man looking for water. He was her Messiah (v. 26).

APPLY THE WORD

What would you do if you encountered Jesus in an ordinary moment of life such as the grocery store checkout line or the gas station. What would you ask? What might He ask you? The truth is that we can have this personal conversation with Jesus anywhere and at any time. Spend time today in honest, one-on-one communion with your Messiah.

PRAY WITH US

Please give your prayer support to Moody's president, Dr. Paul Nyquist, today. Lift up in prayer Dr. Nyquist's ministry and his leadership responsibilities, asking God for guidance and wisdom in all decisions for Moody Global Ministries.

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER

7

Now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.

John 4:42

Seeing Is Believing

Do personal reviews on social media sites such as Yelp make a difference? Researchers say, definitely! They estimate that more than 70 percent of consumers will be influenced to stay at a hotel or eat a restaurant if the business has positive reviews. In fact, 88 percent of consumers trust online reviews just as much as the recommendations they receive from their friends.

After the Samaritan woman left Jesus, she returned to her town giving Him rave reviews. She shared how Jesus told her everything she ever did. Then, taking her impression one step further, she posed the question: “Could this be the Messiah?” (v. 29). Her testimony was effective: “Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him” (v. 39). Jesus stayed with the Samaritans for two days, and after He left many more became believers. It was impossible to

remain unchanged once they had seen and heard Him firsthand.

From there Jesus returned to Cana in Galilee where He performed His first miracle. He was confronted by a royal official whose son was close to death (v. 47). When the father asked Jesus to intervene, His response may seem surprising: “Unless you people see signs and wonders . . . you will never believe” (v. 48). Yet the official continued to beseech Jesus to come to his child’s aid. Notice that Jesus did not grant his request to go to the child, but He performed a miracle of healing from where He was. When the official obeyed Jesus, he learned that his son had been healed at the exact time Jesus said he would live (vv. 50–53). Certainly, this was cause to believe! His entire household, which would likely have included both children and servants, trusted in Christ.

APPLY THE WORD

While we often testify about the latest restaurant we enjoyed or complain about a horrible hotel we visited, we may fail to testify on the Lord’s behalf. Share with someone today, in person or even on social media, the blessing God has been to you. Your personal testimony may have a greater impact than you would expect.

PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers Moody’s trustees, whose names you can find on page 5 of this issue. We thank God for their ministry as they faithfully serve to uphold Moody’s legacy of commitment to the eternal truth of Scripture.

I and the Father are one.

John 10:30

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER

8

The Father Sent Me

H. G. Wells claimed that, from his perspective as a historian, “Jesus Christ is easily the most dominant figure in all history.” Many have agreed with Wells’s historical assessment, but they stop short of faith. Mahatma Gandhi said, “I cannot say that Jesus was uniquely divine. He was as much God as Krishna, or Rama, or Mohammed, or Zoroaster.”

Many still ask: Was Jesus indeed God, or was He merely an admirable man? In today’s passage, Jesus had just finished healing a paralytic man who had been lame for decades. The Jewish leaders were upset, not just because Jesus had performed this miracle on the Sabbath but also because He was assuming the role of divinity. This transgression particularly troubled them.

They were right. Jesus could not have put it more plainly. He had been sent by His Father. In verses 19 through 23, He explains how God had given Him

authority over death and life and the authority to judge the sins of mankind. If you do not honor the Son, said Jesus, you do not honor the Father.

Graciously, Jesus extended an invitation to those who questioned Him. If they would believe in God, who sent Him, they would cross from death to life (v. 24). He urged them to believe, because time was short. Notice the repetitive phrase, “a time is coming” (vv. 25, 28). Judgment would come swiftly; would they be ready?

Abundant evidence pointed them to the Savior. They had been given John the Baptist who testified on His behalf (vv. 33–34). They had studied the Scriptures, given by God, yet did not recognize the Messiah (vv. 39–40). Some, no matter how much evidence was given to them, would refuse to believe that Jesus was the Son of God, the Savior, the Messiah.

APPLY THE WORD

When you talk to people about your faith, begin by asking what they believe about Jesus. In his book *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Josh McDowell expounds on the argument made by C. S. Lewis: Jesus’ claims of divinity mean He could only be one of three things: a liar, a lunatic, or Lord. Who do you say Jesus is? The answer determines your destiny.

PRAY WITH US

Would you spend some time in prayer for Moody students? We are grateful for those God brings to our three campuses, eager to learn in preparation for a lifetime of serving the Lord. Pray also for Day One on Moody Chicago campus.

They got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus.

John 6:24

Searching for Jesus

In an attempt to break the Guinness World Record for the largest sit-down meal served, the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority in Washington, D.C., prepared a banquet for 16,206 guests. Two thousand employees served three tons of beef, 1.5 tons of mashed potatoes, and 40,000 pounds of bagged ice.

Today’s passage details an amazing meal when Jesus used small means to feed many people. Following intensive days of teaching and healing, He retreated for a private moment, but again He was followed by a “great crowd” (v. 5). People had heard about the wonders and teachings of this extraordinary man. They were searching for Jesus.

Seeing the crowds, Jesus asked Philip how they would feed them. Philip’s response was practical. Feeding a crowd of 5,000 men (plus women and children) would be no simple task. It would require “more than half a year’s

wages” (v. 7). Andrew volunteered supplies—two small fish and five loaves of barley bread. What seemed like scarcity became abundance in the hands of Jesus. We are not told how this multiplication happened, only that everyone was fed, with plenty to spare. The miracle astounded everyone. “Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world” (v. 14).

Jesus withdrew from the crowd, but again He defied the limitations of nature when He walked on the water (v. 19). He was far more than an extraordinary person—the disciples were witnessing God Himself.

The theme of this month’s study was taken from verse 24: the crowd headed to Capernaum “in search of Jesus.” Plenty of people were searching for Jesus. Would they discover the Jesus they thought they wanted, or would they recognize Him as the Son of God?

APPLY THE WORD

When facing obstacles, are you like Philip, seeing only the practical limitations? Or are you like Andrew, trusting that God can transform meager resources into abundant blessing? Do you trust your abilities or God’s plans? Ask God to amaze you with His ability not only to meet your needs but also to surpass your expectations.

PRAY WITH US

Paul Santhouse, vice president of Publications, together with his executive assistant Karen Waddles, request your prayers for Moody Publishers teams and their work of spreading the gospel through their books, in print and online.

From this time on many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him.

John 6:66

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER

10

When They Found Him

Author Flannery O'Connor wrote stories set in the South about odd characters facing spiritual choices. "I think there is no suffering greater than what is caused by the doubts of those who want to believe," she said. Today's passage appears to be a disagreement about bread, but it is really about the difficult choice between belief and disbelief.

To both His disciples and to the crowd in the synagogue, Jesus claimed to be the living "bread that came down from heaven" (v. 58). This conversation clearly reveals the confused state of mind of His followers. First, they were looking for a direct solution to their physical needs. They wanted Him to be the bread that satisfied their physical cravings. Notice how they compared him to manna (v. 31). They even phrased it as a demand: "Always give us this bread" (v. 34).

They did not understand that Jesus Himself was the only bread that would

satisfy their deepest spiritual longings. They wanted Jesus for what He could give them—physical healing, miraculous provisions, or political freedom. They saw a man whose parents they knew, and they resisted His claim of divinity (v. 42).

Jesus redirected the conversation to His identity as the Son of God. He referred back to the Scriptures and attempted to explain to them that He is the "bread of life" (v. 48). But even after several lengthy explanations, they continued to misunderstand His message: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" (v. 52).

The religious skeptics were not the only ones confused. Even His disciples struggled to believe. In fact, many turned away from Jesus and quit following at this point. This was the fork in the road, the dividing point. Would they believe or would they walk away?

APPLY THE WORD

Each of us comes to a crossroads where we must either choose to believe or walk away. What is your choice? Do you believe that Jesus is indeed the Son of God, the bread of life? Do you trust His claims rather than demand that He conform to your own expectations? Through Jesus we can find life, but only if we follow Him.

PRAY WITH US

Keeping Moody Publishers in prayer, please add the Business Management team to your list. May God bless the work of Duane Koenig, Gregory Miller, Michael Davis, and Stephen Gemeiner as they oversee operations and seek new audiences.

Whoever speaks on their own does so to gain personal glory, but he who seeks the glory of the one who sent him is a man of truth.

John 7:18

Public or Private?

Nelle Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird*, was uncomfortable with fame. Even after her bestselling novel won the Pulitzer Prize in 1961 and was made into an Academy Award-winning movie in 1962, Lee refused to give interviews or make public appearances. Until her death in 2016, she remained an intensely private person.

The private life of Jesus was met with suspicion and skepticism. His own brothers even said, “No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret” (v. 4). They urged Jesus to take a public stand and show Himself to the world. They were not motivated by any evangelistic impulse, though, but rather by skepticism and doubt about who He was (v. 5). Jesus was following the will of His Father and waiting for the proper time to deliver His message (v. 6).

The Jewish Festival of Tabernacles, also called Sukkot, commemorated the huts

in which the Israelites lived during their forty-year exile in the desert (see Lev. 23:33–43). It was a time to remember and rejoice at God’s provision. Jesus attended the festival in secret, and about halfway through He began to teach publicly in the temple courts. According to onlookers, Jesus’ teaching was amazing and demonstrated superior knowledge (v. 14). Jesus used His teaching to reinforce His claim to divinity and His connection to God the Father: “My teaching is not my own” (v. 16).

Jesus did not speak or act on His own behalf but did everything according to the will of God, the One who sent Him (v. 18). While the Jewish leaders were impressed by His teaching and amazed by His miracles, they resisted His claim to divinity (v. 21). They could not understand, and so they sought to destroy Him.

APPLY THE WORD

Many of us seek the approval of others, whether it’s a compliment on a new outfit, praise for a well-prepared meal, or having a post liked on social media. But we are not to seek glory for ourselves but instead direct all the praise to the Lord. He sees all we do, whether in private or public, and we can bring Him glory in everything (see 1 Cor. 10:31).

PRAY WITH US

As we conclude our prayer time for Moody Publishers, please extend your prayer support to the Sales team: Adam Dalton and Dean Galiano. We are grateful for their service of helping bring Moody publications to our friends in the U.S. and overseas.

*Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said,
rivers of living water will flow from within them.*

John 7:38

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER

12

He Is the Messiah

Water boils at 212 degrees Fahrenheit or 100 degrees Celsius. Before a full boil, air bubbles form on the bottom of the pan and then rise to the surface.

As the temperature continues to climb, the water reaches a rolling boil. But interestingly, exact boiling temperature is not consistent. It is influenced by the atmospheric pressure in that location.

Jesus was teaching in the temple courts and claiming to be the Messiah. The crowds were impressed by His authoritative teaching and miraculous acts. But when He asserted that He had been sent by God, the reaction boiled over (vv. 29–30). The temperature among the religious leaders had reached a new intensity.

Notice the debate that began about Jesus' claim to be God. Some believed Him, for His signs and miracles clearly had to be the work of the Messiah (v. 31). But others declared that He couldn't

possibly be the Messiah because He was from Galilee and not Bethlehem (vv. 41–43).

The Pharisees were certain that they had evidence for a blasphemy conviction. They sent temple guards to arrest Jesus (v. 32). This plan backfired, however, when the temple guards returned without Jesus—they had been impressed by His teaching (v. 46)! Thwarted in their attempt to seize Jesus during the festival, the priests and Pharisees became entrenched in their opposition to Jesus.

The religious leaders conveniently dismissed any evidence that Jesus might be telling the truth about who He was. He was from the wrong place. The crowd who supported Him was an ignorant mob. Only their approval was valid for a religious teacher (v. 48). They found any excuse to avoid believing that Jesus was their Messiah.

APPLY THE WORD

We must always ask the Holy Spirit to help us understand God's truth when we are reading and studying Scripture. Like the Pharisees, we can be tempted to wield our knowledge of Scripture as a weapon against others rather than have our perspective shaped to conform to the Lord. Ask God to open your heart and mind to His truth.

PRAY WITH US

Anthony Turner, VP and dean of Student Enrollment Services, and his staff work hard processing hundreds of application packages to choose future students who love God and have a heart for ministry. Would you pray for them today?

WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER

13

*“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared.
“Go now and leave your life of sin.”*

John 8:11

Two Witnesses

A defendant is allowed to act as his or her own expert witness during a court trial; no law expressly bars a defendant or someone related to that person from qualifying as an expert witness. There are, however, pitfalls to doing so. The most obvious is that the testimony can be suspected of bias. The best witnesses are independent experts with no direct ties to the person on trial.

In our passage today, the Pharisees wanted to judge two people. The first is the woman caught in adultery. The Pharisees accused her of breaking the Law and wanted her stoned (v. 5). Even more than doling out punishment for this woman, they wanted to trick Jesus into publicly denying the requirements of the Mosaic Law. But instead of speaking or picking up a stone, Jesus bent to write on the ground.

We are not sure what He wrote, but one by one, her accusers left. Finally, the

judgment came down to two people: Jesus and the adulterous woman herself. In that beautiful moment, Jesus declared her free of condemnation and set her free, instructing her to leave her life of sin behind (v. 11).

Jesus Himself also faced judgment. When Jesus “spoke again to the people” (v. 12), He claimed to be the light of the world. The religious teachers demanded to know on what basis He claimed deity: “Your testimony is not valid” (v. 13). They asserted that He needed two witnesses, not just His own claim.

They didn’t understand three important truths. First, Jesus was the sovereign Lord of the universe—the most credible witness in history! Second, He had the validation of God the Father (v. 15). And third, they had no right to pass judgment on Jesus—He was God, and they were not.

APPLY THE WORD

We often want to assume God’s role and pass judgment on others, including ourselves, refusing to forget the wrongs we have done. When you ask God to forgive you your sins in Jesus’ name, He has promised to forgive you. There is no more condemnation. Like that woman, “Go now and leave your life of sin” (v. 11).

PRAY WITH US

Today and tomorrow join us in prayer for our Financial Aid staff, who help eligible students receive a Moody education regardless of their financial situation. Please pray for Heather Shalley, Rosio Morales, and Tammy Easter.

*Then you will know the truth,
and the truth will set you free.*

John 8:32

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER

14

Set Free

Patrick Henry is known for his speech in the Virginia House of Burgesses ending with the stirring words, “Give me liberty, or give me death.” An onlooker described it as “one of the most bold, vehement, and animated pieces of eloquence ever delivered.”

Freedom is worth being passionate about. Jesus reminded His followers of the bondage of sin and the freedom that comes only through believing in Him, and in this passage we learn several key ideas about spiritual freedom.

First, we can be set free when we believe that what Jesus claimed about Himself is true (v. 31). Jesus is the Messiah, the Light of the world, God Himself. Second, “everyone who sins is a slave to sin” (v. 34). When we disobey God and His will for our life, we become enslaved or controlled by our actions. But when we become children of God, we are freed from the eternal

condemnation of spiritual bondage (v. 36). In Christ alone we find forgiveness of sin and the freedom to follow Him well.

Third, Satan’s lies prevent us from understanding God’s truth and His plan for our lives. His distortion of truth can close our ears and hearts to understanding what He says (v. 44). Fourth, God frees us from the power of both sin and death: “Whoever obeys my word will never see death” (v. 51).

This shocked Jesus’ listeners. “Who do you think you are?” they exclaimed (v. 53). Jesus replied with unmistakable clarity: “Before Abraham was born, I am!” (v. 58). Jesus was God—He claimed both the divine attribute of eternal existence before Abraham and the divine personality of “I AM” the God of Israel who delivers His people from bondage (see Ex. 3:14).

APPLY THE WORD

Thank God today for the freedom you have in Christ Jesus. He has given you victory over sin and has freed you to follow Him. You are free from the fear of death, because as one of God’s children, you have eternal life in Jesus Christ. If you do not know this freedom, it is yours for the asking. Accept His offer today.

PRAY WITH US

Again, encourage in prayer the staff of Financial Aid—Frank Slomkowski, Daniel Auzenne, Timothy Krug, and Zerrika Lloyd. Students they work with appreciate their counsel, attention to detail, professionalism, and good communication.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

by Mike Kellogg, Moody Radio Host (Retired)

Q **In the Old Testament, a priest had to offer sacrifices for the people, but we know that no one is saved by the sacrifice of bulls and goats. How then were these Old Testament saints saved?**

A They were saved by faith in the promises of God, just as we are. We find this truth affirmed in the New Testament: “And the scripture was fulfilled that says, ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,’ and he was called God’s friend” (James 2:23; see Gen. 15:6; Rom. 4:3; Gal. 3:6). The litany of Old Testament saints in Hebrews 11 reminds us again and again that they were saved by faith. By faith, Abel was commended as righteous; by faith, Enoch was commended as one who pleased God; and by faith, Noah became an heir of righteousness. Sarah, Rahab, Gideon, and Moses were all saved by faith. The chapter ends this stirring roll call of Old Testament heroes by saying, “These were all commended for their faith” (v. 39).

Old Testament saints believed that God would fulfill His promise to send a Savior. They believed in God’s promise to provide a way for them to dwell with Him forever. Today, we are saved through faith that God has fulfilled His promise to send a Savior. We trust in the person and work of Jesus, who made the final sacrifice for our sins: “For it is by grace you have been

saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8–9).

Q **The Bible often speaks of God as a jealous God, and yet the Scripture makes it clear that jealousy is linked to quarreling and anger, and it goads us into destroying relationships rather than protecting them. But at the same time, Scripture points out that God is a jealous God (see Ex. 34:14; Deut. 4:24; Josh. 24:19; Nahum 1:2). What’s the difference?**

A When the Bible speaks of a jealous God, it is talking about that wonderful covenantal relationship that God has with us. He warned the children of Israel against worshiping the idols of other nations surrounding them. He alone was worthy of their praise and worship, and He also knew the destruction that came from worshiping idols, including child sacrifice and sexual immorality.

God is jealous both of us and for us. Only by abiding in God exclusively can we know the fulfillment that He yearns to provide (see Jer. 29:11). Moving away from a relationship with God is sure to hurt us. Yes, God is jealous. He loves us and wants what is best for us, which is the worship of His name and obedience to His will.

Only by abiding in God exclusively can we know the fulfillment that He yearns to provide.

Q **Why do young people refuse to believe that the rules laid down by their parents really are good rules? I don't mean simply rules about cleaning their rooms or washing their hands before eating, but the rules like not drinking or taking drugs and abstaining from premarital sex.**

A Like countless generations before them, young people today want to know for themselves whether or not something is good for them. Mom or Dad can lay down the law about what's good or bad, but kids think there's nothing as certain as experiencing it for themselves. Then they'll know for sure. But they are wrong. Unfortunately, some will suffer the consequences of doing what is absolutely wrong. Illicit booze and drugs and sex can lead to addiction, disease, a criminal record, and a wake of destruction. It's difficult to recover from these consequences apart from the miraculous grace of God.

As parents, grandparents, and other loving adults, what can we do to keep our precious children from falling prey to these temptations? First, we must recognize that these sins are not new today (see 1 Cor. 10:13). Second, we must encourage our children to be immersed in a lifestyle of faith, including prayer for God's guidance, habits of studying

Scripture, and a community of godly friends (see Prov. 12:26). And finally, we should commit to praying for our children throughout their lives, asking God to protect them and to restore them if they have fallen from a path of righteousness (see Luke 15:11–32).

Q **Why did God demand in the Old Testament, even before the Law, that people had to sacrifice animals to Him?**

A The Bible makes it clear that shed blood is the way to atone for sin (see Ex. 30:10). The Fall of Adam and Eve brought sin and death into the world and separated humanity from God (see Genesis 3). Death cannot come into God's presence, and the only way to ask for forgiveness of sin and be in a relationship with God is by presenting an offering of blood, which is life (see Lev. 17:11–14). Rather than kill or harm ourselves to make this sacrifice, God allowed people to offer the blood of an animal instead.

These sacrifices of animals had to be repeated and were imperfect. But they pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice, Jesus, who offered His blameless, holy life on our behalf to pay for sin once and for all (see Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:27). Because of the sacrifice of Jesus, we are able to have forgiveness of sin and a relationship with God with the promise of eternal life.

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER

15

This happened so that the works of God might be displayed in him.

John 9:3

Spiritual Blindness

Fanny Crosby (1820–1915) wrote more than 8,000 hymns, many of which we still sing today. She was also blind. As a young girl she wrote of what others viewed as a disability: “It seemed intended by the blessed providence of God that I should be blind all my life, and I thank Him for the dispensation.”

Jesus encountered a man who had been blind from birth (v. 1). The disciples assumed his condition was a punishment, the result of a sin committed either by his parents or by him. But Jesus gave a different reason. He said the man was born blind so that “the works of God might be displayed in him” (v. 3). God would transform this deficit into something remarkable.

What happened next was clearly miraculous. Jesus took ordinary dirt, mixed it with His own spit, and covered the man’s eyes. Then He gave him an instruction: “Go . . . wash in the Pool of

Siloam” (v. 6). When the man obeyed, his sight was restored.

This miracle to heal physical blindness revealed the spiritual blindness of those who observed it. Their vision was clouded by doubt and skepticism. They thought it was the wrong man (v. 9). They questioned the source of the healing and the event itself (v. 12). Then, they brought him to the religious authorities, who tried to negate it by claiming that miracles should not be performed on the Sabbath (v. 14). Even the man’s parents were questioned.

This episode illustrates the desperate blindness of the human condition. Jesus has offered truth, freedom, healing, and access to God. But those who persist in unbelief will find that sin effectively closes both our hearts and our eyes, blinding us from believing in Jesus (v. 39).

APPLY THE WORD

While you may not be blind, you no doubt struggle with other disabilities or limitations. It may be easy to wonder what we have done to deserve such punishment. But, as Jesus said, the blind man’s condition was not a result of sin, but intended to bring glory to God. Ask God today to use you—your strengths and your weaknesses—for His glory.

PRAY WITH US

Today, please commit to prayer Moody’s executive VP and chief operating officer, Steve Mogck. We appreciate his contribution to Moody Global Ministries and ask God to bless his service.

*My sheep listen to my voice;
I know them, and they follow me.*

John 10:27

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER

16

Our Good Shepherd

Did you know that sheep are mentioned more than 500 times in the Bible? Also consider the number of shepherds in Scripture, beginning with Abel in Genesis 4. Abraham, Moses, and King David were shepherds, too. In the New Testament, shepherds were among the first to learn of Christ's birth.

In John 10, Jesus refers to Himself as the Good Shepherd (vv. 11, 14). Jesus used this image to communicate the intimate nature of the relationship between Him and His followers.

First, He reminded them that the shepherd never has to forcefully command his sheep. They follow the shepherd not under duress but because they know and trust his voice (v. 4). Second, the sheep were allowed freedom and given nourishment (v. 9). The shepherd cared for them with sacrificial love (v. 11). The sheep never had to be afraid because the shepherd

was aware of all threats and provided complete protection (v. 12). Third, there was an intimacy between Jesus and those who followed Him: "I know my sheep and my sheep know me" (v. 14). Jesus compared this relationship to the one He has with His own Father (v. 15).

The relationship of the Shepherd and His sheep is so solid and committed that nothing can destroy it. Nothing can separate us from the Good Shepherd, not even death: "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish" (v. 28).

The reaction of the crowd was divided. Some declared him "demon-possessed" and scorned His authority (v. 20). Still others picked up stones to stone Him (v. 31). Notice that their antagonism was not based on a misunderstanding; they rightly understood that He was claiming to be God. The truth caused some to believe but others to accuse Him of blasphemy (vv. 33, 42).

APPLY THE WORD

If you've never committed to memory Psalm 23, consider learning these verses. Our Shepherd leads, protects, and guides us, offering us provision and care. We are never alone, even in the most difficult situations. You can also listen to the hymn "Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" to focus your worship on Jesus, our Great Shepherd.

PRAY WITH US

Support in prayer the ministry of our Public Relations team: Brian Regnerus and Ava Roller. They are an important link in the chain of Moody's ministries, as they represent Moody to communities beyond our campuses.

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER

17

*Did I not tell you that if you believe,
you will see the glory of God?*

John 11:40

Power over Death

C. S. Lewis, reflecting on the death of his wife, Joy, wrote: “Even the insane call, ‘Come back,’ is all for my own sake. I never even raised the question whether such a return, if it were possible would be good for her. . . . Could I have wished her anything worse? Having got once through death, to come back and then, at some later date, have all her dying to do over again? They call Stephen the first martyr. Hadn’t Lazarus the rawer deal?”

Nobody would want to face the pain and separation of physical death twice. So why didn’t Jesus heal Lazarus and prevent His friend’s death? Jesus was clearly grieved (vv. 33, 35). And certainly Jesus could have healed Lazarus from afar, just as He had done in the past (v. 37). But the resurrection of Lazarus occurred for a purpose not immediately evident to Mary, Martha, or Jesus’ disciples, who had questioned

His decision to return to Bethany in Judea where angry people were waiting to stone Him.

Lazarus was raised to demonstrate Jesus’ power over death and to allow onlookers to witness the glory of God Himself. In past miracles, Jesus had healed the sick and even restored sight and mobility. But here He goes even further. Lazarus was in the grave for four days when Jesus performed this miracle (v. 39). Martha worried about moving the stone due to the odor from the deceased.

Enough time had elapsed that there could be no doubt in anyone’s mind that Lazarus was physically dead. There was no trickery; this was clearly an act of God Himself. As a result, many more believed in Jesus (v. 45). Lazarus faced life and death once again so that others might live forever.

APPLY THE WORD

Have there been times when you felt frustrated with unanswered prayers? Know that God’s timing is perfect. Be assured that He has heard you, He has not forgotten your request, and He cares for you. Ask for His will to be done and for others to see His glory through your circumstances.

PRAY WITH US

We invite you to pray for Janet Stiven, Moody’s vice president and general counsel, and the staff of our Legal department. Thank the Lord for His never-ceasing protection and guidance for Moody Global Ministries, including the area of legal practice.

*You will always have the poor among you,
but you will not always have me.*

John 12:8

MONDAY
SEPTEMBER

18

Perfume and Plotting

The perfume Imperial Majesty is the most expensive fragrance in the world: \$215,000 for 16.9 ounces. It is valued not only for the scent but also for the bottle made of Baccarat crystal, embedded with a five-carat diamond, and trimmed with an 18-carat gold collar. Only a few bottles were produced, and half the bottles were archived and not sold.

Today's passage begins with the religious leaders plotting to kill Jesus and ends with a woman anointing Him with extravagant perfume. The suspicion and threats facing Jesus were not new. Following the resurrection of Lazarus, however, the Pharisees and chief priests called a meeting of the Sanhedrin in order to agree on a plan to arrest Jesus (11:57). They feared that Jesus' rise in popularity could result in unrest among the Jewish people and incite Rome to intervene. The high priest suggested it was better to sacrifice one person than risk the safety

of all their people. Indeed, Jesus would be sacrificed in order that all might live (11:49–52; Rom. 5:19).

Meanwhile, Jesus returned to the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus before proceeding to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover. Mary, in a moment of extravagance, poured a valuable bottle of perfume on Jesus' feet and wiped them. The home was "filled with the fragrance" (12:3). Mary's action reflected the enormous gratitude in her heart for what Jesus had done. But others frowned on it, particularly Judas who would soon betray Jesus and was already stealing from their funds (12:4–6).

Jesus accepted this gift of anointing and outpouring of love from Mary. He reminded His friends and followers that their perspective should be shaped by the fact that His time on earth was coming to an end.

APPLY THE WORD

The religious leaders wanted power, Judas wanted money, but Mary wanted Jesus. Do we measure our success by the world's standards of career advancement or material possessions? Or are we shaped by an eternal view that desires to please God and offer Him our extravagant worship? Ask God to keep your heart focused on eternity.

PRAY WITH US

Greg Thornton, senior vice president of Media, requests your prayers for the broadcasting and publishing ministries at Moody and God's blessing on these powerful vehicles of bringing the knowledge of the Savior to the world.

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER

19

*They loved human praise more
than praise from God.*

John 12:43

Who Will Believe?

Many Christians across the globe celebrate Palm Sunday using palm fronds to recreate the Triumphal Entry of Jesus. Some then knot the palms into small crosses as a reminder that the time of Jesus' crucifixion would quickly follow.

The miracle of Lazarus' resurrection from the dead continued to produce new believers (vv. 17–18). Word had spread about Jesus, and so great was the celebration of His arrival in Jerusalem that onlookers waved palm branches and cried, "Hosanna!" (v. 13). The Pharisees became deeply concerned: "Look how the whole world has gone after him!" (v. 19).

This was a watershed moment in Jesus' public ministry. He told the crowd His hour was coming (v. 23), and as confirmation, God spoke in an audible voice from heaven. While each miracle was intended to bring God glory and help people believe, still many did not:

"Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him" (v. 37).

How could people who saw Jesus standing in front of them in person, people who heard the voice of God Himself, still refuse to believe the truth about the Messiah? The Suffering Servant had been revealed (v. 38; see Isa. 53:1), but the people were too blind to see Him (vv. 39–41; Isa. 6:10).

Verse 42 includes an interesting tidbit—some of the leaders did believe what Jesus said was true. But alas, they feared the Pharisees more than they trusted the Lord. Rather than sacrifice their access to power and prestige they chose to keep quiet about their faith in Jesus. "They loved human praise more than praise from God" (v. 43). God Himself had spoken and Jesus promised eternal life, but they were trapped by fear.

APPLY THE WORD

Why do you believe? Who do you believe? It is easy to be swayed by public opinion or influential voices. We must consistently return to God and His Word, which is our anchor when the storm of life rages around us. No matter who may question or threaten us, we must always keep our eyes, ears, and heart focused on Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

The history of Moody Radio's WGNB goes back to 1989, and it's still going strong, sharing God's message of love and hope with listeners in West Michigan. Please include the staff in prayer: Jack Haveman, Scott Curtis, Joshua Harrison, and Perry LaHaie.

*Having loved his own who were in the world,
he loved them to the end.*

John 13:1

WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER

20

Loved to the End

In 2015, *The New York Times* published a report about the rampant abuses in the nail-salon industry. “The Price of Nice Nails” documented how many women who spoke little English were forced to work long hours in dangerous conditions for extremely low wages. Behind the scenes at some glitzy salons, women were treated as little better than indentured servants to unscrupulous owners.

In Jesus’ day, caring for the feet of guests was an important act of hospitality, but it was usually performed by a low-ranking servant—not the master of the house! No wonder the disciples were embarrassed when Jesus knelt before them to wash their feet. He was violating their understanding of social protocol.

Christ was aware that Judas was about to betray Him (vv. 21–27), and He knew that “the hour had come” (v. 1). He

wanted to let His disciples know that He would love them to the end (v. 1).

Simon Peter, who was going to publicly deny Jesus in the near future (v. 38), was horrified at the idea of the Lord washing his feet: “No . . . you shall never wash my feet” (v. 8). Peter thought he was honoring Jesus, but really he was defying Him. Jesus gently insisted that He must wash Peter’s feet, not because they were dirty but because Peter needed to allow Jesus to know and love him completely.

Jesus washed the disciples’ feet to show them their need for spiritual cleansing and to demonstrate His new social protocol (v. 14). In contrast to the Pharisees who wanted public honor, being a follower of Jesus means having a willingness to serve others. What Jesus had done in loving and serving each of them, they were now to do for one another.

APPLY THE WORD

We are called to love and serve one another, just as Christ has loved us. Consider how you can perform an act of service for someone. Maybe a mother of young children needs a few hours of childcare, or an older neighbor would enjoy a chat over coffee. Perform this act of love with a prayer that God will bless this person through you.

PRAY WITH US

As provost and dean of Education, Dr. Junias Venugopal plays a key role in shaping the vision of Moody education. Let’s ask for the Lord’s leading and direction for him and his staff. Thank you for praying!

THURSDAY
SEPTEMBER

21

*I will come back and take you to be
with me that you also may be where I am.*

John 14:3

Never Abandoned

In 1979, China's one-child policy was introduced. According to records in the Jiangsu province, 4,091 infants—98.5 percent of them girls—were abandoned there between 1981 and 1982. Like many, Zhou Maodu, a factory manager, faced beatings, fines, and imprisonment if he tried to keep his newborn daughter. Decades later, when they were finally reunited, he told her how he cried for days after abandoning her.

In John 14, Jesus comforted His disciples in anticipation of what was to come. He assured them they would never be abandoned. The passage begins with a tone of consolation: “Do not let your hearts be troubled” (v. 1). Jesus offered them two specific promises to give them hope.

First, He assured them He would be back to take them to His “Father’s house.” He was going away to prepare a place for them and would return for

them. “You know the way to the place where I am going” (vv. 2–4).

But how could they possibly know the way to this place? Jesus reassured them, “I am the way” (v. 6). If we know Jesus, we already know the way to heaven and to the Father. Our access is through faith in Him. Philip then asked to see God Himself; if they could have one glimpse, perhaps they would feel certain. Jesus reminded His disciples, “Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father” (v. 9).

The second promise is the presence of the Holy Spirit (vv. 15–31). The Spirit is our advocate, providing comfort and hope. Jesus’ followers are not orphaned when He is physically absent from the earth. His Holy Spirit teaches us, turns our hearts to the Lord, and brings peace (vv. 25–27). Our God will never abandon us.

APPLY THE WORD

Many hope to get to heaven on the basis of their good works—but have they done enough? Others hope heaven awaits because of their religious affiliation or family connections. Jesus removes our anxiety of doing or being good enough, for He alone is the way to heaven. That is good news! Share this amazing truth with someone today.

PRAY WITH US

Calvin Robinson and George Brown serve in Sponsorship/Underwriting at Moody Radio. Pray for God’s grace for them as they establish fruitful connections with businesses and organizations on behalf of Moody Radio’s programs.

Remain in me, as I also remain in you.

John 15:4

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER

22

Stay Connected

In 2003, a widespread power outage hit states from Massachusetts to Michigan, affecting some 45 million Americans. Attributed in part to a software glitch, the blackout lasted for up to a week in some places. New York City alone had sixty fires in the first 24 hours of the blackout, largely caused by the use of candles.

Being disconnected from electricity is stressful, but being disconnected spiritually has even more devastating results. In our passage today, Jesus reminded His disciples to remain deeply connected to Him and to one another.

Jesus is the “true vine,” and His Father is the gardener. (v. 1). The Father prunes each branch to ensure that those that remain will be fruitful. Here we see the divine providence of God as He shapes and directs us. When we remain connected to Him, we thrive and bear fruit. Without Him, we accomplish nothing (v. 5). Notice that we are not

the gardeners—we are not commanded to prune but rather to abide in Christ. The minute we disconnect from Him, we become disabled. Whatever we accomplish is for God’s glory alone; He is our source of life (v. 8).

Staying connected to Jesus means following His command to love one another. This was not the first time Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another (see 13:34). The true test of followers of God is whether they practice sacrificial love, following the example of Jesus (v. 13).

Finally, Jesus elevates our status from servants to friends (vv. 14–15). We are now involved in His business, we share His concerns, and we have a special mission on His behalf. The fruit of love in our lives is evidence of God’s work to prune and shape us into branches that bring Him glory.

APPLY THE WORD

How do you stay connected to Jesus? Perhaps reading this devotional and God’s Word each day strengthens your commitment to Him. Time in prayer, even short prayers as we go about our day, keeps our attention on the Lord. Listening to worship music and taking time to serve others are ways we can abide and rest in Jesus.

PRAY WITH US

Ken Heulitt, chief financial officer, requests your prayer support for Moody’s resources, a sound fiscal year ahead of us, and the continuous fellowship and communication with our donors. He will be grateful for the prayers of God’s people!

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER

23

*If the world hates you,
keep in mind that it hated me first.*

John 15:18

It Hated Me First

According to Open Doors USA, 322 Christians are killed for their faith, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, and 772 forms of violence are committed against Christians every month. In many areas of our world, Christians experience persecution on a daily basis.

These facts should grieve but not surprise us. Jesus said this would happen. In our text today, He tells His disciples the plain truth without mincing words: they would be hated in this world by those who hated Him first (v. 18). Jesus knew those who followed Him would face severe persecution. Here He assures them that the suffering they will face is not because of anything they have done wrong. In fact, it is because of what they have done right.

The world attacks Christ-followers because they “do not belong to the world” (v. 19). The world does not obey

Jesus’ teaching and does not recognize Him as God. What are we to do? First, Jesus told the disciples that, with the help of the Holy Spirit, they must testify about Him. We must never quit speaking of Jesus, even in the face of rejection (v. 27). Second, they must not be surprised or disheartened. As opposition increases to Christianity, we must realize that Jesus said it would be so: “Remember what I told you” (v. 20).

Remember too that those who oppose Jesus will face judgment and be found guilty (v. 22). They have the revelation of God, through Jesus. They have both His miracles and His message, and are therefore fully responsible for their hatred and rejection. How much better to endure persecution for the sake of Jesus than to face God’s judgment for rejecting Him! And we do not stand alone, for through the power of the Holy Spirit we bring glory to God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

APPLY THE WORD

Pray today for your brothers and sisters who are persecuted for their faith. For specific prayer requests, you can download a world prayer map from the website of Release International. As part of your prayer time, ask God to strengthen your own witness and willingness to share the good news about salvation in Jesus Christ.

PRAY WITH US

Jim Elliott, vice president of Stewardship, heads an excellent team that connects Moody’s ministries with our donors who make these ministries possible. Please pray for encouragement and strength as they serve God at Moody.

*In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world.*

John 16:33

SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER

24

Grief to Joy

In an article in the journal *Birth*, two researchers examined the available evidence for the claim that women have no long-term memory of the pain they experience during childbirth. They found that women do in fact have vivid memories of pain, but many also interpret the pain of childbirth as an experience that gave them self-esteem, coping tools, and the joy of a new baby.

In today's passage, Jesus again spoke to His disciples about His coming death, assuring them that the sorrow they would soon experience would turn to joy (v. 20). Notice that Jesus never promised to remove their grief, nor did He give them a free pass to escape life's troubles. As we know from other Scriptures, they did indeed experience hardship (see Acts 12).

Jesus explained that He was leaving them to go to His Father. The disciples still struggled to understand and asked

Jesus to speak plainly. The Master Teacher used the illustration of the pain of childbirth. Like the physical difficulty of birth, they would suffer anguish, but that pain would be temporal and replaced quickly by lasting joy (vv. 19–22).

Jesus assured them that God loved them. Although the twelve disciples would no longer be together physically, they would never be alone. This refers back to His promise of the Holy Spirit (see John 14). His disciples did not need to fear because He was greater than any trouble in the world.

While Jesus was speaking to His disciples about the immediate trials to come, this passage applies to us today. In this world we have trouble (v. 33), but we also have confidence that Jesus Christ has overcome the world. We are assured of God's love, His nearness in times of trouble, and His victory over anything we might face.

APPLY THE WORD

What is weighing on your heart today? Take a moment to jot down the heaviest burdens you are facing at this moment. God has not promised to take away each troubling experience, but He does have the power to transform it and to bring you joy. Pray over your list today, giving your worries to Him and thanking Him for the gifts of love, joy, and His Spirit.

PRAY WITH US

Please include in your prayers Moody Distance Learning staff: Maria-Elena Franco and Brianna Weight in Marketing, John Engelkemier and Nida Prukpitikul in Operations. Thank God for their work, bringing a Moody education to students across the globe.

MONDAY
SEPTEMBER

25

The world may believe that you have sent me.

John 17:21

Praying to the Father

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9–13 has been a beloved part of Christian faith and worship for millennia. Many believers pray weekly or even daily, "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

John 17 recounts another prayer by Jesus to His Father, this time anticipating His death on the cross, and asking that God's will be done. Jesus first appealed to His Father directly on His own behalf. He asked that His death would bring glory and honor to God. He was completing the job that the Father had given Him: "He humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross" (Phil. 2:8). Now He prayed to be rightfully returned to His former glory.

Next, Jesus turned His attention away from Himself and prayed on behalf of

the disciples, whom He loved (vv. 6–11). He asked that God would keep and protect them, even after He was gone from the earth. He commended them for their belief in both Himself and the Father who sent Him. Jesus knew that since they must remain in the world, they would need God's protection from Satan (v. 15). He asked that God would continue to sanctify them and keep them close (v. 19).

Finally, Jesus extended His prayer to include future Christians. Through Jesus, we too can have unity with God. Jesus looked forward to the day when Christians would be reunited with Him in glory (v. 24).

This is a sobering prayer; Jesus was just moments from His arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Yet His concern was not for Himself but for those for whom He would soon die.

APPLY THE WORD

Today, follow the example of Jesus and spend time in intercessory prayer on behalf of others. You might have a list of requests from your church or small group. You can mention friends and family members by name, and ask the Lord's blessing on both your church and political leaders. Finally, pray for those who are sick or in need of salvation.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. John Jelinek, VP and dean of Moody Theological Seminary, will appreciate your intercession for the seminary's new academic year, its professors and staff, and new programs to serve our students. Pray for God's guidance in every decision.

“I am he,” Jesus said.

John 18:5

TUESDAY
SEPTEMBER

26

Arresting Jesus

Fugitive George Wright spent 41 years, as he describes it, “living with a shadow.” Convicted of murder in 1962, Wright was sentenced to thirty years in prison. After escaping in 1970, he hijacked a plane and ran from authorities, hiding on three continents. Even after he was arrested, the FBI was unable to extradite him from Portugal, where the 74-year-old still resides today.

The group who came to arrest Jesus was armed and prepared to arrest Him like a dangerous fugitive. Certainly their “torches, lanterns, and weapons” were unnecessary (v. 3). Jesus knew “all that was going to happen to him” (v. 4). In fact, He willingly went out to meet His captors and identified Himself.

Jesus surrendered without any struggle, asking them only to release the disciples (v. 8). Peter, however, did not surrender easily. The volatile disciple pulled out his sword and cut

off the right ear of the servant of the high priest (v. 10). Peter’s reaction provides a contrast between the normal human reaction to resist and the willing submission of Jesus. The Lord was ready to receive the cup of suffering God had appointed for Him. Despite Jesus’ submission, He was taken like a common criminal, and “they bound Him” (v. 12).

Perhaps it is shocking then, that Peter—the one most willing to fight on Jesus’ behalf—would deny Him three times. Even when confronted by a relative who had seen him cut off the servant’s ear, Peter denied knowing his Lord. Fear and disappointment changed this bold, impassioned disciple into a cowardly liar. Jesus was not the king he had expected. Rather than fighting to the end, He went like a “lamb to the slaughter” (Isa. 53:7). What type of king had Peter chosen to serve?

APPLY THE WORD

Fear, anger, and disappointment can derail any of us. When confronted by challenges, do you lash out in anger? When God doesn’t seem to be working the way you expected, do you react in frustration? When you feel threatened because someone knows you’re a Christian, do you deny your Savior? Ask for the strength to follow faithfully, no matter the cost.

PRAY WITH US

We have the privilege to pray for Lillie Hill, Louis Ballasch, and Todd Sacco who serve in the Commons, Moody’s cafeteria on our Chicago campus. Express gratitude to God for their faithful service of providing meals and snacks to hundreds of people daily.

WEDNESDAY
SEPTEMBER

27

“Shall I crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

John 19:15

The Crucifixion

While excavating a stairway leading to an ancient theatre in the ruins of Caesarea, archaeologists discovered a small stone bearing four lines of text. The inscription refers to the life of Pontius Pilate. The dedication stone was likely originally placed during the time of Jesus’ ministry. The Pilate Stone is preserved in the Israel Museum.

Pontius Pilate is a central figure in today’s reading, which records the details of Christ’s crucifixion. Jesus was handed over to Pilate for sentencing. The punishment was cruel—a brutal flogging, a crown of thorns piercing His head, and mocking and beatings administered by the soldiers.

But in addition to this display of hatred and violence against an innocent man, the text reveals the inner struggle of Pilate himself when he came face to face with the “king of the Jews” (v. 3). At first, Pilate was unwilling to

sentence Jesus to death: “I find no basis for a charge against him” (v. 4). Jesus’ accusers were unhappy with this decision and responded with cries of “Crucify! Crucify!” (v. 6).

Why was this earthly ruler so reluctant to condemn Jesus? To whom would Pilate listen? Phrased another way, who caused him greater fear? Though his conscience urged him to let Jesus go, Pilate’s fear of the mob prevailed, and he handed Jesus over to be crucified (v. 16).

The sign reading, “JESUS OF NAZARETH, KING OF THE JEWS” was placed above Christ’s head on the cross (v. 19). Jesus refused to deny who He was, even up until the very last moment with the crowds turning against Him. Pilate’s sign, written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek, bore witness to all that the One who hung upon the cross was no ordinary criminal.

APPLY THE WORD

We saw the example of Peter who reacted out of anger and fear, and we see the example of Pilate, whose fear of the mob led him to condemn an innocent man to death. We need to abide in Christ in order to act in faith and not fear. Commit your challenges to the Lord in prayer, asking for His strength to make the right choices.

PRAY WITH US

Dr. James Spencer, VP and dean of Moody Bible Institute, oversees our Undergraduate School in Chicago and Spokane, Wash. Pray that under his leadership, the school will continue to stay true to biblical principles and face the challenges of our times.

They will look on the one they have pierced.

John 19:37

The Death of a Hero

Most people would define the word *hero* as “champion and victor,” and in our text today Jesus does not appear to be victorious. No doubt Jesus’ family and followers were bewildered and distraught as they watched Him die. Had they been wrong? Was He not the Messiah they had longed for?

There can be no doubt that Jesus experienced physical death. The disciples watched during those final moments as He gave His mother into their care (v. 27). Since the next day was a special Sabbath (v. 31), the Jewish leaders were concerned about bodies left to die on the hill. What a sad irony that His accusers were more compelled by keeping the letter of the Law than by preserving the life of an innocent man.

To hasten the death of those being crucified, the soldiers were ordered to break the legs of the two thieves. But when they came to Jesus, He was

already dead. To confirm His death, a soldier pierced His side (v. 34). While the guards may have done this for their own logistical reasons, once again Scripture was fulfilled (see Ps. 34:20; Zech. 12:10). In addition, this act of physical execution offered indisputable evidence that Jesus had indeed died, providing further evidence for the Resurrection to come (v. 35). All of this was done that the “scripture would be fulfilled” (v. 36).

After the bodies were removed, two men stepped forward to claim and care for Jesus. Joseph of Arimathea, described as a secret disciple of Jesus, took the body for burial (v. 38). Nicodemus also helped to anoint Jesus’ body with spices. These two men placed Him in a new garden tomb (v. 42). It appeared to be the end for the one they had hoped would be the Messiah.

APPLY THE WORD

We’d much rather skip to the end of the story, but it’s important to contemplate the death of our Savior. He was willing to bear the pain of our sin, dying a humiliating death as a criminal so that we could have eternal life. The words of the spiritual, “Were You There When They Crucified My Lord?” walk us through the moments of Jesus’ death.

PRAY WITH US

Thank the Lord today for the dedicated service of Ryan Yoder in Exterior Maintenance. May he look to the Lord and praise Him as he takes care of the landscaping at Moody’s Chicago campus.

FRIDAY
SEPTEMBER

29

*These are written that you may believe
that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.*

John 20:31

He Is Risen!

On August 14, 1945, President Harry Truman announced that Japan had unconditionally surrendered to the Allies, bringing an end to World War II. Two million people crowded into New York City's Times Square to begin a celebration that would continue for days. In Chicago, a half million people crowded into the Loop. The war, with all of its suffering and loss, was finally over. Victory was ours. Peace was secured.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ was revealed quietly at first to a few individuals. Yet it was still characterized by amazement and excitement. God had declared victory over death. Jesus was risen, just as He said! (see Matt. 28:6).

The day started out in a panic. Mary Magdalene was visiting the tomb and startled to discover that the stone had been removed. Assuming the worst, she ran for the disciples. Peter then ran to examine the evidence. Scripture

tells us the disciples "still did not understand" (v. 9). Mary, still distressed by the absence of Jesus' body, began to weep.

And then Jesus appeared, and He spoke her name. And in that moment, everything changed. Her distress quickly turned to joy, and she immediately went to tell the others: "I have seen the Lord!" (v. 18). Jesus appeared not just to Mary but also to the disciples. They were overjoyed to be reunited, and even Thomas, heavy with doubt, believed. They saw Him, spoke to Him, and touched Him.

John wants us to have no doubt about the purpose for this Gospel: "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (v. 30). The war is over. Victory is ours through Jesus!

APPLY THE WORD

Reading this account of the Resurrection should fill your heart with joy. And this Gospel was given to you so that you, also, might believe in the One who conquered the grave on your behalf. Have you declared Jesus as your Lord and your God? If you have, praise Him today. And, if not, He has given you all of these signs so you might have life.

PRAY WITH US

Despite emails and group internet forums at the workplace, phone communication is still needed and necessary. We value the service of Daniel Schombert who maintains the Chicago campus phone system in good working order. Would you pray for him today?

*Even the whole world would not have room
for the books that would be written.*

John 21:25

SATURDAY
SEPTEMBER

30

More Than Books Can Tell

The Library of Congress is recognized as the largest library in the world, with millions of volumes in its massive collection. But John's Gospel claims that not even this renowned library would be large enough to contain the life and works of our Savior.

In our text, Jesus appeared to the disciples on the Sea of Galilee. They were in the midst of an ordinary fishing expedition, but unfortunately they caught nothing (v. 3). Imagine their excitement when they realized the figure standing on the shore, shrouded by the early morning light, was Jesus. His instructions revealed His identity. When they cast their net on the right side of the boat, they hauled in 153 large fish (v. 11). This miracle confirmed the Lord's care and provision, and "they knew it was the Lord" (v. 12). The breakfast between Jesus and the disciples was the third time He had appeared to them after His resurrection.

Jesus' conversation with Peter is one of the most beautiful and powerful dialogues recorded in Scripture. Peter denied Jesus three times at the crucifixion; now Peter declared, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you" (v. 16). Three times Jesus asked Peter about his love, and three times Peter answered yes. The gracious Savior gave Peter the opportunity to reverse each denial with an affirmation of his love and commitment. Peter was then commissioned to serve Jesus by serving His people. The Good Shepherd entrusted the care of His beloved sheep to His disciple who had once abandoned Him.

Peter's life is a wonderful testimony of fear being transformed into faith by the power of the Lord. The fisherman was commissioned to be a shepherd; this impetuous disciple would be a bold preacher of the gospel.

APPLY THE WORD

What an amazing subject is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We can never tire of hearing the stories of His life or in telling others about our love for Him. As John says, "We know that his testimony is true" (v. 24). May we devote our lives to telling others about our Lord and to serving Him until the end.

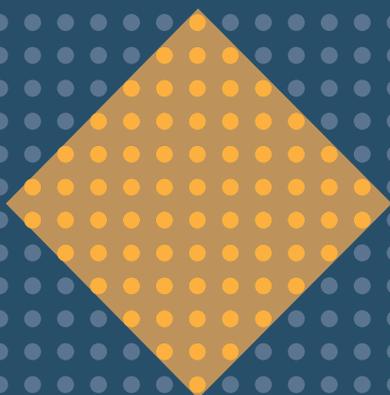
PRAY WITH US

What have you learned this month? As we conclude our Bible study and prayer with *Today in the Word*, thank God today for His Son, who came to this world, found us, and saved us. Praise God also for giving us the ability to know and love Him.

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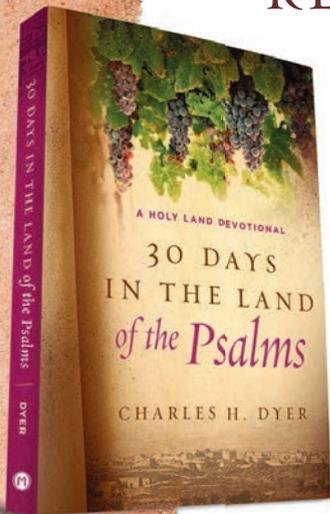
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