

Seven Day Journeys with Jesus

7-Day Journey with the Messiah

Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, pondering the meaning and challenges of knowing Jesus, the Messiah. Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: Isaiah 2:1-5

Reflect: “. . . let us walk in the light of the Lord!” is Isaiah’s hope and plea for his people, the people chosen by God to be God’s people in the world. One can still imagine hearing and seeing Isaiah standing on a local street corner shouting, “Come on people! The Messiah is coming, the Messiah is here, let’s risk a little and believe in our potential to be people of the light! Let’s say no to the darkness of hatred, and anger, and racism, and poverty. Let’s shout out *YES* in hope for justice for all!”

Pray: God of light and hope, challenge and guide us to be people of the light in our world. Give us the courage to witness to the message and power of Jesus, our Messiah. Amen.

Day Two

Read: Baruch 5:1-9

Reflect: Baruch challenges his people to take off their robes of mourning and put on the hopeful splendor of God. There will always be elements of sadness and grief in our earthly lives, yet as Christians those darker emotions are balanced with a sense of hope. Christ our Messiah has died, has risen, and will come again. We too, die, rise, and experience life in Christ in new ways.

Pray: God of joy and hope, in times of darkness and sadness challenge us with the light of your hope that we may witness to the world the resurrected power of Jesus our Messiah, Amen.

Day Three

Read: Zephaniah 3:14-18

Reflect: Zephaniah is a short book in the Old Testament, only three small chapters. He writes about gloom, judgment, and promise. Zephaniah holds onto the promise that God loves his

people so much that despite our mistakes God will renew us in his love. In the turmoil of our lives as we make choices that may not be right for us and for the world it is comforting to know that God seems unable to stop loving his people.

Pray: God of love and hope, may your ever present gift of love soften our hearts and help us to be transformed through the gift of your loving faithfulness. Amen.

Day Four

Read: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Reflect: In this passage Jeremiah paints a clear picture of what the Messiah will be about—justice. It is hard for us to grasp the sense of justice that Jesus brings to the world. Does it mean the rich will become the poor, and the poor rich? Does it mean everyone will have the same? Does it mean an end to suffering and war and greed? Love and justice given out in equal measure, imagine that!

Pray: God of justice and hope, nurture in us a deep sense of justice for our brothers and sisters that all may rejoice in the providence of your abundant gifts. Amen.

Day Five

Read: Matthew 11:2-11

Reflect: John the Baptist sent his disciples to ascertain if Jesus was indeed the Messiah. John knew Jesus to be the Messiah he had been called to prepare the way for when Jesus clearly stated his mission: to help the blind see, the poor walk, the deaf hear, to raise the dead to new life, and to proclaim the Good News.

Pray: God of healing and hope, may we see and respond to the needs of the people we meet, may we hear the cries of the poor, may we offer hope to those who suffer, may we speak in word and action your Good News to the world. Amen.

Day Six

Read: Luke 3: 10-18

Reflect: John the Baptist calls his listeners to repent and live just lives. The repentance is not so much for one's wrong doings, but rather repentance that opens one to humility and God's loving forgiveness. Jesus' ultimate act as Messiah was dying on the cross that we might have the freedom and new life of God's forgiveness through the power of the resurrection.

Pray: God of forgiveness and hope, open our hearts to the gift of your forgiveness, that we might offer peace and life to the world. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: Isaiah 9:1-6

Reflect: Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace: these are the names Isaiah ascribes to Jesus, the Messiah. The Messiah is a man with the authority to make wise and prudent decisions, be a protector of the people, love them with everlasting love, and bring peace in all that he does.

Pray: God of wisdom and hope, dare us to imagine what seems unimaginable to us—a world of peace, hope, and love, rooted in the Good News of the Messiah Jesus. Amen.

7-Day Journey as Servants of God

Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, pondering the meaning and challenges of being a Servant of God. Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: Isaiah 42:1-4,6-7

Reflect: This reading is the first of Isaiah’s proclamations about the “servant” whom we know as Jesus. One can almost see God in heaven standing beside Jesus and saying, “Here is my Son, my chosen one, in whom my heart delights, in whom I love and in whom I entrust great things.” God the Father speaking in pride of Jesus. What is harder for us to imagine is God speaking of pride in us, “Here is John, Joan, Samantha, and so on, who fill my heart with joy . . . in whom I delight and in whom I entrust great things.” Can you imagine God saying that about you? Why, or why not?

Pray: God, who delights in us, help us to be the people you know we can be. Love and challenge us to be people who bring forth your justice to the nations. Amen.

Day Two

Read: Isaiah 55:1-11

Reflect: Do you remember a time when you were really thirsty, so thirsty you imagined never being able to drink your fill of refreshment ever again? Isaiah challenges us to remember that God is the source of fulfillment in our lives, that God alone can sustain us and quench our thirsting spirits. Isaiah also reminds us that we are people of hope—no word from God fails to achieve that which God sent it to do.

Pray: We seek you God, knowing that you are near and that you will nurture us to be fruitful disciples. Grant us what we need to be ministers of your kingdom, Amen.

Day Three

Read: Mark 1:7-11

Reflect: The Gospel of Mark seeks to answer two fundamental questions—who is this Jesus, and what does it mean to be his disciple? In this reading, Mark is trying to make it clear that Jesus is God’s “beloved Son; with whom God is well pleased.” As disciples of Jesus, we are called through our own baptism and commitment to discipleship to carry out Jesus’ mission in

our world, in the hope that God might say to us, “here is my son/daughter, who loves as I have shown them to love, in whom I am well pleased.”

Pray: Spirit of God, anoint us for your ministry, that we might be faithful disciples of your Son Jesus. Amen.

Day Four

Read: 1 Samuel 3:3b-10, 19

Reflect: Samuel was fortunate that Eli was so wise. When God called Samuel he did not recognize who was calling until his mentor Eli realized what was going on and prompted Samuel with an appropriate reply. We, too, often misunderstand or misinterpret God’s calling to us. God is patient though, and persists in calling us until we are able to clearly hear his voice and respond to him.

Pray: God of persistent calling, speak to us and help us to open our hearts to hear you. Send us holy companions for our journey that we may be supported to hear and respond to your call. Amen.

Day Five

Read: John 1:35-42

Reflect: Have you ever tried to explain to someone an experience or a relationship or a significant event that you had participated in, and by the end of the explanation your response was, “come and see for yourself”? That is the response John offers to his readers about following Jesus—come and experience, because once you experience Jesus, your life will never be the same.

Pray: Push us to come and see Lord, that our lives may be transformed forever. Amen.

Day Six

Read: Mark 1:14-20

Reflect: The disciples that Jesus invited with him seemed to be regular, ordinary kind of people—like Simon and Andrew, James and John, who were fishermen. Ordinary people going about the ordinary things of making a living and attending to one’s work in life. We are called as disciples to make our ordinary lives extraordinary witnesses of God’s call to be his disciples.

Pray: God of transformation, help us to see your extraordinary presence in the ordinary moments of our lives that we may, through word and action, testify to the power of your transforming love. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: Luke 1:1-4, 4:14-21

Reflect: In this reading from the third Sunday in Ordinary time Year C, Luke is telling us two important things. First, Luke tells us that he will be giving us an orderly account of Jesus' life and the early church community that followed him. Second, Luke is making it clear that Jesus' ministry was powered by the Holy Spirit—"the Spirit of the Lord is upon me." How does the Holy Spirit power you to proclaim the Good News?

Pray: Send us your Spirit O Lord, that we might boldly proclaim your Good News. Amen.

7-Day Journey with the Suffering Servant

Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, pondering the meaning and challenges of being a disciple of the Suffering Servant. Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: Isaiah 52:13—53:12

Reflect: In this suffering servant passage from Isaiah proclaimed on Good Friday, we hear Isaiah consoling the Hebrew people while they were being held captive in Babylon. He speaks of the Messiah who is coming, a Messiah who is willing to suffer and die that his people might be free. We know that Messiah to be Jesus.

Pray: Bless us, O Messiah, with the courage to suffer for the kingdom that all might come to know the power of your hope-filled love. Amen.

Day Two

Read: Hebrews 4:14-16, 5:7-9

Reflect: This second reading from Good Friday consoles us in our humanity for it challenges us to remember that Jesus was a person like us; a person who felt pain, and sorrow, and the temptations of this world. But Jesus did not follow any of the temptations, but lived his life in complete obedience to what God asked of him. Are we listening to God and obeying him or are we following those things that tempt us?

Pray: Call to us O Lord, that we might learn to listen to your voice and follow you in obedient love. Amen.

Day Three

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Reflect: “Do this in remembrance of me.” Break bread, crush grapes, be broken for the sake of the Kingdom of God, and remember the power of the resurrection. Each time we celebrate Eucharist we re-member, make present again, Jesus’ passage from death to life in anticipation of Jesus’ coming again. Each time we enter into that mystery we are called to renew our commitment to serve and love as Jesus did.

Pray: May we carry in our hearts the memory of Jesus' gift to us that it may empower us to live as he lived. Amen.

Day Four

Read: Romans 6:3-4, 6-11

Reflect: How often do you step back and say bring me more challenge Lord, more chances to die to myself so that I might live more in you? The path to the fullness of life is a path, through our baptism, that invites us to die to sin and to live each moment of our lives for God.

Pray: Strengthen us O Lord, that we might choose life in God over sin and destruction. Amen.

Day Five

Read: John 13:1-5

Reflect: Every Holy Thursday we enter into this Gospel reading of Jesus washing his disciples' feet. Every Holy Thursday we are faced with the question, whose feet am I called to humble myself to wash in loving service this year? Who has wronged me that I need to reach out to in love and forgiveness?

Pray: Humility is hard for us, God. Help us to serve and be served, to love and be loved, to forgive and to be forgiven. Amen.

Day Six

Read: John 12:20-26

Reflect: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). This is the powerful image that the Gospel of John offers us about Jesus' death. In our society we have an expression that says no pain, no gain. Suffering leads to greater things. But suffering with the purpose of reconciliation and redemption is the greatest suffering of all. We must die to parts of ourselves that are not loving, parts that are not in sync with Jesus' message of love and service. In dying we move on to becoming even more beautiful and life-giving than we were before. We are transformed from a single grain of wheat to a stalk of wheat that produces many life giving seeds so that others may have life through Christ.

Pray: Purify our hearts O Lord, that we might follow your example and live our lives in service to your people. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: Psalm 31:2, 6, 12-13, 15-16, 17, 25

Reflect: This Psalm is sung during the Good Friday liturgy, and the response echoes through our beings as we enter into the Gospel proclamation of the passion—“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.” Let that be our lament and plea to God when life is difficult and painful for us. Let the words of Jesus, as he trusted in God, be our words too.

Pray: Lord, grant us pardon, grant us comfort as we walk in times of pain and darkness to the light of everlasting life and hope in you. Amen

7-Day Journey with the Resurrected Lord

Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, pondering the meaning and challenges of being a disciple of Jesus, the Resurrected Lord. Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17-19

Reflect: Christ has died, Christ has risen, Christ will come again. Jesus did amazing things as he walked on this earth—loved, healed, preached, challenged, and so on. His life on earth cannot be separated from the power and gift of the resurrection, for in this reading Paul reminds the Corinthians that the salvation Christ won by his passion, death, and resurrection belong to each of us as we pick up our crosses and work towards building the kingdom of God.

Pray: God of life, you place on our shoulders only that which you know we can manage with your help. Nurture our spirits that we may walk in the hope of the resurrection and full union with you. Amen.

Day Two

Read: Acts 4:32-35

Reflect: “There was not a needy person among them.” This is a challenging reading as one looks around the world today and sees how many people live in utter poverty, lacking clothing, shelter, food, employment, health care, and so on. With so many churches and places of worship, and so many Christians walking about, why are there still so many needy among us?

Pray: God of all, challenge our comfortableness, open our hearts to the needs of others that we might not only share from our extra but may sacrifice our personal needs so that others may have life. Amen.

Day Three

Read: John 20:19-31

Reflect: On Pentecost Sunday we hear this reading from John telling us of Jesus’ post-resurrection commissioning, or sending forth of the disciples. Jesus offers them peace—a peace that is not simply a “everything will be okay now,” but a peace that says, “I have risen, the reign of God that was intended and created by God for all time is now here.” This is the reign of God whose builders would be supported, comforted, and challenged by the Holy Spirit.

Pray: God of resurrection and new life, help us to imagine the unimaginable—a world where peace and love through the gift of Jesus are possible. Send your Spirit upon us that we might breathe life and love into our world. Amen.

Day Four

Read: John 21:1-19

Reflect: The readings of the Easter season challenge us to recognize the risen Lord. Scripture scholars believe that the 153 fish that the disciples caught in this reading are symbolic of the “universal outreach of the church,” the church’s calling to be a diverse community that reaches out in evangelization, through the power of the risen Lord, to proclaim the Good News to the world.

Pray: God of Good News and hopeful dreams, give us the words and actions we need to proclaim your Good News in our world. Amen.

Day Five

Read: John 10:11-18

Reflect: Most of us are far removed from the world of sheep and shepherds. It is hard for us to enter into the image of being one of Jesus’ sheep—but it is not hard to imagine Jesus knowing us so well that he knows whether we belong in his flock or not. It is difficult to imagine someone giving their life for another—but it is not hard to imagine the loving Jesus freely giving his life for us.

Pray: God of grace and life, give us wisdom that we might hear your voice when you call us and give us courage that we may die to self in order that others may have life. Amen.

Day Six

Read: Matthew 28:16-20

Reflect: “Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” Easter season is a time to be renewed and strengthened in our faith by remembering that Jesus, the risen Lord, is with us forever. We are not good with the words “forever”—when things get too hard in a relationship forever is sometimes changed to “for as long as we can make this work.” When despair overtakes our efforts to change the world, ‘forever’ is sometimes changed to “Well, I tried.” When Jesus said forever he meant forever.

Pray: God of forever, stretch us to trust in your ongoing and unconditional presence in our lives. May your faithful commitment to us enable us to be faithful in our commitments to others. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: John 15:26-27, 16:12-15

Reflect: Sometimes a parent can be heard saying to a child, “You won’t understand this now, but when you get older it will make more sense to you.” Jesus had a sense of what the disciples needed to know and when they needed to know it. In John 16:12, Jesus says, “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.” In his wisdom Jesus knew that his disciples had a lot to learn and a lot to integrate from his short time with them, and that they would need help doing so. Help was to come from the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who would guide and support the disciples after Jesus’ death.

Pray: God of wisdom and patience, you reveal yourself to us in ways that we are able to understand and respond to. Help us to be patient with others, to be with them in ways that let them know the Good News of the power and love of the risen Lord. Amen.

7-Day Journey with Jesus—Who Do You Say I Am?

Who do they say I am? Who do you say I am? Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, pondering Jesus' question, "Who do you say I am?" Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: Mark 8:27-35

Reflect: Jesus asks his disciples two important questions in this passage. "Who do people say that I am?" and, "Who do you say that I am?" There comes many times in each of our lives when we need to answer for ourselves who Jesus is, remembering the impact and role he plays in our lives. We also need to answer for ourselves how our experience and relationship with Jesus will impact and transform our lives. It is one thing to know of Jesus; it is another thing to know him personally and to feel the power of his faith in us.

Pray: All knowing God, open our hearts to know your Son Jesus and so to be transformed into his likeness. Give us the courage to proclaim who we know him to be and share his Good News with the world. Amen

Day Two

Read: John 6:41-51

Reflect: "I am the bread of life." When Jesus begins a statement with "I am" he is really saying something about his relationship with us. What does Jesus do for us? He feeds us with himself, he gives life with the gift of his unconditional love for us and the world. The manna, the bread, that God fed to the Israelites did not last, it disappeared. Jesus the bread of life will never abandon us.

Pray: Giver of life, nurture our hunger for life that we might come to realize that the fullness of life is only found through you. Amen.

Day Three

Read: John 6:51-58

Reflect: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven." Jesus asserts himself as sent by God to feed the world. He asserts himself as having a mission conceived in love by God and freely given by God to feed the world. He is not just a Messiah, a passing thought, but the Messiah that will fill the world with the food of love.

Pray: Source of life, bring us back to you when we try to feed our hunger with things of this world that are perishable. Amen.

Day Four

Read: John 10:1-10

Reflect: “I am the gate for the sheep.” A gate is an object that protects us from danger. We put gates on our fences to allow those we invite in and out of our yards. We put gates around stairways to prevent young children from falling. We put gates on our pastures to allow animals we raise to enter and leave according to the plans we have for them. Jesus is telling us that he is the gate to life, that through him we will be cared for and loved abundantly beyond our imagination.

Pray: Shepherd us O God, beyond our sins, beyond our limitations, from death into life. Amen.

Day Five

Read: John 10:11-18

Reflect: “I am the good shepherd.” A good shepherd knows their sheep and teaches them to listen to his or her command. Can you imagine how hard shepherding humans must be? We humans like to do what we want when we want. We seldom journey together to the same place. We are not always smart at discovering the wolves in our midst so, we fall in to sin and unhealthy choices. We simply are not that good at being led.

Pray: Lead us O Lord to the life giving pastures of your kingdom. Amen.

Day Six

Read: John 14:1-12

Reflect: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life.” Jesus shares with his confused disciples that he will lead them to God, for he is in God and God is in him. He could not put it any simpler for his disciples and for us—this is the way, discipleship in Christ, there is no other path to the fullness of life for us.

Pray: God of truth, guide us in your ways of love that we may walk faithfully the path to life. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: John 15:1-8

Reflect: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vine-grower.” Watch out! Here come the pruning clippers! Jesus says that those branches that do not bear fruit will be pruned to increase the opportunity for fruit to be born. Regular pruning as disciples helps us to get rid of our parts that are not bringing life to the world, such as sin and selfishness. Celebrating the Sacrament of Reconciliation on a regular basis helps us to do that. Our best witness to the Good News is through fruitful actions—love, generosity, kindness, faithful service.

Pray: God the vine grower, you know what is best for us and we open ourselves to the wisdom of your pruning. Amen.

7-Day Journey with Jesus—Living as a Disciple

Living as a disciple demands ongoing conversion and learning. Spend a series of seven days, or seven prayer opportunities, with some of the parables that Jesus shared will help us overcome our resistance to the fullness of what the Gospel asks of us. Read the reading, ponder the reflection, and live out the prayer!

Day One

Read: Matthew 20:1-16

Reflect: This parable offers hope to those who are late in hearing and responding to the Good News, and it offers challenge to those who have already embraced life with Jesus. If this parable annoys us it simply means that we have some work to do—our love for others and for the Good News is not yet as broad or as inclusive as it is called to be. After all, why should it matter to us that because they started late they don't deserve to be in the kingdom as much as the rest of us? Shouldn't we rejoice with them instead of being angry?

Pray: Generous God, your love knows no boundaries and cannot be confined. Help us to love with your inclusive life giving love. Amen

Day Two

Read: Luke 15:11-32

Reflect: As often as the Prodigal Son is read to us it still challenges us. It just does not seem fair that one son stays and works hard with his Father while the other is off playing and partying. Why is it so hard for us to rejoice that the lost has been found?

Pray: Loving God, help us to embrace the power of your forgiving love for all. Amen.

Day Three

Read: Matthew 22:1-14

Reflect: The Old Testament often uses the image of a wedding feast to portray final salvation. We are invited to the feast, but will we choose to attend? A guest was asked to leave because he was not dressed in his wedding garment—the wedding garment is a metaphor for the change of heart and mind that are needed to enter the kingdom. If we choose to say yes to attend God's wedding feast, will we have the right attitude and loving stance?

Pray: Creator God, you invite all to attend your great feast. Bless us with loving hearts to be ready for your invitation. Amen.

Day Four

Read: Luke 10:29-37

Reflect: The story of the Good Samaritan is another parable that we sometimes take for granted. Someone is hurt, so do we risk and help out or do we walk on by, minding our own business, scared of being hurt or dirtied or taken advantage of by the injured party. There is also a cultural challenge in this parable, for it is a person of a different culture who dares to risk and help out the robbery victim. Do culture, fear, mistrust, selfishness, business, and so on prevent you from helping another in need?

Pray: Compassionate God, your love for your people is beyond our comprehension. Bless us with courage and hope that we might reach out to those who need our help. Amen.

Day Five

Read: Luke 12:16-21

Reflect: In this parable Jesus calls the rich farmer a fool as he saved up to make life easy for himself. This reading packs a heavy punch—what are we investing in? Are we putting time and resources in the right things, or are we off track and investing selfishly?

Pray: Generous God, help us to be good stewards of our resources that all may have what they need and that we may invest in the things that are of greatest importance in your kingdom—love and justice. Amen.

Day Six

Read: Luke 16:19-31

Reflect: In this parable the audience listening to Jesus includes the Pharisees, who Luke describes as loving money. Jesus boldly challenges them, painting a clear picture of what is in store for those who walk past suffering and poverty, and are self-indulgent with their resources. The ending of this parable is hard for us to grasp, as it does not seem possible that God would not give the rich man's family another chance by allowing him to go and warn them. But as the parable says they would not listen anyhow, as they had been invited to change numerous times and did not respond. What do you think? Is there some point when God's invitation to be saved is impossible to be heard?

Pray: Patient God, you invite and challenge us to be transformed by the power of your love. Help us to trust you and in your goodness. Amen.

Day Seven

Read: Luke 19:11-27

Reflect: When Jesus chose to stay at Zaccheus's house those following Jesus grumbled and complained that he was hanging out with a sinner. After Zaccheus chose to give away half of his possessions to the poor, Jesus told them all this parable of the ten gold coins. The Gospel challenges us to steward well the gifts and resources God has given us. Those gifts include knowing Jesus and the Good News. With whom and how are we sharing that Good News?

Pray: Awesome God, the values of the kingdom sometimes seem so far from our human experience of greed and selfishness. Mold us into your likeness that we might learn to be generous with the gifts you have given us. Amen.