

# CONNECT 7

DAILY DEVOTIONS

EVIDENCE  
OF  
THE  
DIVINE



## ***January 10 – February 14*** ***Sermon Series***

### ***Evidence of the Divine***

Proof that Jesus is ...

The Gospel of Mark emphasizes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Mark is fast moving and is characterized by the use of the word “immediately” some 41 times. There is a sense of urgency in Mark’s Gospel. Often times the words and actions of the people described in the Gospel of Mark ask or infer that Jesus should prove who He is. We and the other readers of Mark today, desire **Evidence of the Divine**. We and others need proof that Jesus is who He says He is.

#### **January 10**

**Theme: “The Beloved of the Father” - Mark 1:11**

**Readings: Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Romans 6:1-11, Mark 1:4-11**

#### **January 17**

**Theme: “The Long-Awaited Messiah.” – John 1:45**

**Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Psalm 139:1-10, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51**

#### **January 24**

**Theme: “The One Worthy to Follow “ – Mark 1:17-18**

**Readings: Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20**

#### **January 31**

**Theme: “The Authoritative Teacher” – Mark 1:27**

**Readings: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28**

#### **February 7**

**Theme: “The Great Physician” – Mark 1:30-31**

**Readings: Isaiah 40:21-31, Psalm 147:1-11, 1 Corinthians 9:16-27, Mark 1:29-39**

#### **February 14**

**Theme: “The Son of God” – Mark 9:7-8**

**Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-12, Psalm 50:1-6, , 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6, Mark 9:2-9**

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## Connecting to Worship: January 10

**Theme: “The Beloved of the Father” - Mark 1:11**

**Readings:** Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Romans 6:1-11, Mark 1:4-11

### Before the Beginning

Monday January 4, 2020

You loved me before the creation of the world.

John 17:24

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

**Matthew 3:13–17**

“But if God has no beginning and no end, and has always existed, what was He doing before He created us? How did He spend His time?” Some precocious Sunday school student always asks this question when we talk about God’s eternal nature. I used to respond that this was a bit of a mystery. But recently I learned that the Bible gives us an answer to this question.

When Jesus prays to His Father in John 17, He says “Father, . . . you loved me before the creation of the world” (v. 24). This is God as revealed to us by Jesus: Before the world was ever created, God was a trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit)—all loving each other and being loved. When Jesus was baptized, God sent His Spirit in the form of a dove and said, “This is my Son, whom I love” (Matthew 3:17). The most foundational aspect of God’s identity is this outgoing, life-giving love.

What a lovely and encouraging truth this is about our God! The mutual, outgoing love expressed by

each member of the Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—is key to understanding the nature of God. What was God doing before the beginning of time? What He always does: He was loving because He is love (1 John 4:8).

By: **Amy Peterson**

### Reflect & Pray

**God, thank You for Your overflowing, self-giving love.**

*We are created in the image of a God who is loving and relational.*

## Eloquent, Yet Humble

Tuesday January 5, 2020

The humble [God] teaches His way. —

Psalm 25:9

### Today's Scripture:

Acts 18:24-28

I admire people who can articulate their beliefs and persuade others with their rhetoric. Some call it “the gift of gab” or “having a way with words.”

Others call it “eloquence.”

Apollos had that gift. We are told that he was “an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures” (Acts 18:24). But although he taught accurately about Christ, he preached only of the baptism of John which was a baptism of repentance from sin (v.25; 19:4).

Apollos knew about Jesus’ teachings but may not have known about His death and resurrection and that the Spirit had now come (Acts 2). His teaching was incomplete because he didn’t know about being filled with the Spirit for daily empowerment.

So Priscilla and Aquila, a wife and husband who were friends of Paul, invited Apollos into their home to correct his teaching. Although he was highly educated and knew the Scriptures well, Apollos humbly accepted their instruction. As a result, Apollos was able to continue his ministry, but with newfound understanding.

Psalm 25:9 reminds us that God “guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way” (NIV). If we have a spirit of humility, we can be taught by God and be used to touch the lives of others.

By: Cindy Hess Kasper

### Reflect & Pray

More like the Master I would ever be,  
More of His meekness, more humility;  
More zeal to labor, more courage to be true,  
More consecration for work He bids me do. —  
Gabriel

The place of humility is the place of power.

## Change

Wednesday January 6, 2020

Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand! . . .  
Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. —

Matthew 3:2,8

### Today's Scripture:

Matthew 3:1-12

Medical studies have shown that even though people who have had heart-bypass surgery are told that they must change their lifestyle or die, about 90 percent do not change. Typically, 2 years after surgery the patients haven't altered their lifestyle. It seems that most would rather die than change.

Just as doctors preach a physical message of change to prevent death, John the Baptist came preaching a spiritual message of change. "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (Matt. 3:2). He was preparing the way for the ultimate manifestation of God's reign—the Messiah, Jesus.

Repentance means to change one's mind and attitude about God, which ultimately changes a person's actions and decisions. Those who repent and accept Christ's provision of forgiveness from their sins through His death on the cross will escape spiritual death (John 3:16). Repentance involves confessing sin with godly sorrow, and then forsaking sin. John the Baptist was calling people to turn from one way of living to ways that honor God.

Today, the Lord is still calling us to repent and then to respond with the "fruits worthy of repentance" (Matt. 3:8).

By: **Marvin Williams**

### Reflect & Pray

Repentance is to leave the sin That we had loved before,  
And showing we are grieved by it By doing it no more. —Anon.

Repentance means hating sin enough to turn from it.

## The Obedience Factor

Thursday January 7, 2020

Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. —

Matthew 3:15

**Today's Scripture:**  
**Matthew 3:13-17**

Dewey VanderVelde refused to be baptized. He steadfastly resisted, even when his wife and daughters were baptized one Sunday afternoon.

Years later, his pastor preached on the baptism of Jesus. He pointed out that John the Baptist initially refused to baptize Jesus, but Jesus said, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matthew 3:15).

The pastor then added this comment: “If Jesus obeyed the will of the Father, so should we.”

After the message, Dewey asked to be baptized. He said that he should have obeyed the Lord’s command much sooner, and he regretted having been so stubborn.

The issue, of course, was more than just baptism; it was obedience. The same may be true for us. We may be stubbornly disobeying the Lord in a certain area of our life—lying, cheating, stealing at work, not giving to the Lord.

Here’s what we must face: Jesus obeyed the Father in everything. His submission took Him from the height of popularity to abandonment. It took Him

from public adoration to solitary suffering. It took Him to Pilate’s judgment hall, the terrible road to Calvary, the cross, and the tomb.

Let it be today that we willingly decide to obey the Lord in everything.

By: **David C. Egener**

### Reflect & Pray

**O give us strength to quench the urge  
To do things our own way;  
And help us, Lord, to heed Your Word,  
Its precepts to obey. —Sper**

*True faith will obey without delay.*

## A Fire Called Holy

Friday January 8, 2020

He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Luke 3:16

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

**Luke 3:15–18**

After several years of drought, the wildfires of Southern California left some residents thinking of them as acts of God. This disturbing impression was reinforced when news sources began referring to one as the Holy Fire. Many unfamiliar with the area didn't realize it was a reference to the Holy Jim Canyon region. But who was Holy Jim? According to local history, he was a nineteenth-century beekeeper so irreligious and cantankerous that neighbors tagged him with that ironic nickname.

John the Baptist's reference to a baptism of "the Holy Spirit and fire" also came with its own story and explanation (Luke 3:16). Looking back, he was likely thinking of the kind of Messiah and refining fire foreseen by the prophet Malachi (3:1–3; 4:1). But only after the Spirit of God came like wind and fire on the followers of Jesus did the words of Malachi and John come into focus (Acts 2:1–4).

The fire John predicted wasn't what was expected. As a true act of God, it came with boldness to proclaim a different kind of Messiah and holy flame. In the Spirit of Jesus, it exposed and consumed our futile human efforts—while making room for the love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22–23). Those are the acts of God that He would like to work in us.

By: **Mart DeHaan**

### Reflect & Pray

**How has your life been affected by the work of the Holy Spirit? What does it mean for you to pursue a holy—set apart—life before God?**

*Father in heaven, please replace our fear of Your Holy Spirit with a love, joy, and peace that is as priceless as our stubborn ways are worthless.*

Connecting to Worship: January 10

Theme: "The Beloved of the Father" - Mark 1:11

Readings: Genesis 1:1-5, Psalm 29, Romans 6:1-11, Mark 1:4-11

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## Connecting to Worship: January 17

**Theme: “The Long-Awaited Messiah.” – John 1:45**

**Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Psalm 139:1-10, 1 Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51**

### Come And See

**Monday January 11, 2020**

Come and see. —

John 1:39

#### Today's Scripture:

John 1:35-46

“Can you tell me where I can find the lightbulbs?”

“Sure. Come with me, and I’ll take you to them.”

In many large stores, employees are instructed to take customers to find what they are looking for rather than simply giving them verbal directions.

This common act of courtesy and walking alongside an inquiring person may help us expand our concept of what it means to lead others to Christ.

In John 1, the phrase “come and see” occurs twice.

When two curious disciples of John the Baptist asked Jesus where He was staying, the Lord said, “Come and see” (v.39). After spending the day with Him, Andrew found his brother, Simon Peter, and brought him to Jesus (vv.40-41). Later, Philip told Nathanael he had found the Messiah. To Nathanael’s skeptical reply, Philip said, “Come and see” (v.46).

Witnessing for Christ can be a one-time event when we speak the good news about Him to

others. But it may also involve walking alongside people who are seeking help and wholeness. Our genuine interest in their spiritual welfare, our prayers, and our involvement with them say without words, “Come and see. Let’s walk together, and I’ll take you to Him.”

By: **David C. McCasland**

#### Reflect & Pray

The gospel has to be proclaimed, Its truth we need to share; But sometimes seekers also need To see how much we care. —Sper  
Kindness and compassion have led more people to Christ than proclamation alone.

## Guest List

Tuesday January 12, 2020

When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed. —

Luke 14:13-14

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 14:7-14

Qumran was a first-century Jewish community that had isolated itself from outside influences to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah. They took great care in devotional life, ceremonial washings, and strict adherence to rules of conduct. Surviving documents show that they would not allow the lame, the blind, or the crippled into their communities. This was based on their conviction that anyone with a physical “blemish” was ceremonially unclean. During their table fellowship, disabled people were never on their guest lists.

Ironically, at that same time the Messiah of Israel was at work in the cities and villages of Judea and Galilee. Jesus proclaimed His Father’s kingdom, brought teaching and comfort, and worked mighty miracles. Strikingly, He proclaimed: “When you give a feast, invite the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. And you will be blessed” (Luke 14:13-14).

The contrast between Jesus’ words and the guest list of the Qumran “spiritual elite” is instructive to us. Often we like to fellowship with people who

look, think, and act like us. But our Lord exhorts us to be like Him and open our doors to everyone.

By: **Dennis Fisher**

### Reflect & Pray

The gospel must be shared with all,  
Not just with those like you and me;  
For God embraces everyone  
Who turns to Him to set them free. —Sper  
The inclusive gospel cannot be shared by an  
exclusive people. —George Sweeting

## Waiting

Wednesday January 13, 2020

Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. —

Philippians 3:20

### Today's Scripture:

Titus 2:11-15

In the 1940s, Samuel Beckett wrote a play called *Waiting for Godot*, which is now regarded as a classic. Two men stand on an empty stage, hands in their pockets, staring at each other. All they do is stand and stare. There is no action, no plot, they just stand there waiting for Godot to come.

But who is Godot? Is he a person? Does he represent God? Christian ethicist Lewis Smedes suggests, Godot “stands for the pipe dreams that a lot of people hang on to as an escape.” As the play ends, those men are still standing on the stage doing nothing, just waiting.

When the 50th anniversary of that play was celebrated, someone asked Beckett, “Now will you tell us who Godot is?” He answered, “How should I know?”

*Waiting for Godot* is a parable of many people’s lives—empty and meaningless, a pointless matter of waiting. And if there’s no God of love, grace, and wisdom, then life really is a hopeless waiting for empty time to pass.

How totally different, though, is Christian hope! We’re waiting and “looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13). That hope sustains us—a hope that beyond this world lies a life of indescribable blessing.

By: **Vernon Grounds**

### Reflect & Pray

**We're waiting for You, Lord, to come**

**And take us home to be with You;**

**Your promise to return for us**

**Gives hope because we know it's true. —Sper**

*The greatest joy on earth is to have the sure hope of heaven.*

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## Becoming

Thursday January 14, 2020

Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. —

Luke 2:52

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 2:41-52

I grew up in a small town. No famous people. No busy streets. Not much to do. Yet I've always been thankful for my quiet, uncomplicated upbringing.

One evening when my husband and I were attending a business dinner, a new acquaintance asked me where I was from. When I told her, she said, "Aren't you embarrassed to admit it?"

Unsure whether or not she was joking, I simply said, "No."

Although my town was sometimes belittled for its lack of sophistication, it was not lacking in things that matter. My family was part of a church community in which parents brought up children "in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

Jesus also grew up in a small town: Nazareth. A man named Nathanael asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Jesus proved that the answer is yes. Even though He grew up in an insignificant place, He was the most significant person in all of history.

Experience taught me and Scripture confirms that what matters is not *where* you grow up but *how* you grow up. Sometimes we feel insignificant compared to sophisticated people from prominent places. But we are significant to God, and He can make us strong in spirit and filled with His wisdom.

By: **Julie Ackerman Link**

### Reflect & Pray

O teach me what it cost You, Lord,  
To make a sinner whole;  
And help me understand anew  
The value of one soul! —Anon.  
What we become is more important than where  
we're from.

## Waiting

Friday January 15, 2020

Make haste to help me, O Lord! —

Psalm 70:1

### Today's Scripture:

#### Psalm 70

Make haste to help me, O Lord!” the psalmist David prayed (Ps. 70:1). Like him, we don't like to wait. We dislike the long lines at super-market checkout counters, and the traffic jams downtown and around shopping malls. We hate to wait at the bank or at a restaurant.

And then there are the harder waits: a childless couple waiting for a child; a single person waiting for marriage; an addict waiting for deliverance; a spouse waiting for a kind and gentle word; a worried patient waiting for a diagnosis from a doctor.

What we wait for, however, is far less important than what God is doing while we wait. In such times He works in us to develop those hard-to-achieve spiritual virtues of meekness, kindness, and

patience with others. But more important, we learn to lean on God alone and to “rejoice and be glad” in Him (v.4).

F. B. Meyer said, “What a chapter might be written of God’s delays! It is the mystery of the art of educating human spirits to the finest temper of which they are capable. What searchings of heart, what analyzings of motives, what testings of the Word of God, what upliftings of soul. . . . All these are associated with those weary days of waiting, which are, nevertheless, big with spiritual destiny.”

By: **David H. Roper**

### Reflect & Pray

**Be still, My child, and know that I am God!**

**Wait thou patiently—I know the path you trod.**

**So falter not, nor fear, nor think to run and hide,**

**For I, thy hope and strength, am waiting by thy**

**side. —Hein**

*God stretches our patience to enlarge our soul.*

Connecting to Worship: January 17

Theme: “The Long-Awaited Messiah.” – John 1:45

Readings: 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Psalm 139:1-10, 1

Corinthians 6:12-20, John 1:43-51

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## Connecting to Worship: January 24

**Theme: "The One Worthy to Follow" – Mark 1:17-18**

**Readings: Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20**

### A New Purpose

Monday January 18, 2020

"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people."

Mark 1:17

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

**Mark 1:16–22**

Jacob Davis was a tailor with a problem. It was the height of the Gold Rush in the 1800s American West and the gold miners' work pants kept wearing out. His solution? Davis went to a local dry goods company owned by Levi Strauss, purchased tent cloth, and made work pants from that heavy, sturdy material—and blue jeans were born. Today, denim jeans in a variety of forms (including Levi's) are among the most popular clothing items in the world, and all because tent material was given a new purpose.

Simon and his friends were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. Then Jesus arrived and called them to follow Him. He gave them a new purpose. No longer would they fish for fish. As Jesus told them, "Come, follow me, . . . and I will send you out to fish for people" (Mark 1:17).

With this new purpose set for their lives, these men were taught and trained by Jesus so that, after His ascension, they could be used by God to

capture the hearts of people with the message of the cross and resurrection of Christ. Today, we follow in their steps as we share the good news of Christ's love and salvation.

May our lives both declare and exhibit this love that can change the lives, purposes, and eternal destinies of others.

By: **Bill Crowder**

### Reflect & Pray

**Help me, Lord, to represent You well so that others might be drawn to Your love and salvation.**

*With our new life in Christ we have been given a new purpose.*

## Follow The Signal

Tuesday January 19, 2020

Oh, that my ways were directed to keep Your statutes! —

Psalm 119:5

### Today's Scripture:

Psalm 119:1-8

A driver who ignores traffic signals is “an accident looking for a place to happen.” Anyone cheating on red or stopping absentmindedly on green is a danger to himself and to others. Although a series of red lights can be a pain when you’re eager to get to your destination, an accident can bring even greater pain.

Several years ago I was happily surprised when a traffic signal was finally installed on a corner that had been especially frustrating to me. It turned a daily ordeal into an orderly and predictable way of getting onto a busy street. Waiting occasionally at a red light is now a pleasure—at least at that intersection of bad memories.

The Scriptures too have some “red lights” that should control our lives as Christians. They are the prohibitions against envy, pride, hatred, irreverence, lust, and selfishness. When the Holy Spirit alerts us to their presence, we should immediately hit the brakes. Likewise, as we move into the heavy traffic of daily living, we must quickly respond by obeying the “green” signals of kindness, humility, love, worship, and purity.

God’s stops and starts are designed to help us. We should be as fearful of ignoring a command of Scripture as we are of running a red light.

By: **Mart DeHaan**

### Reflect & Pray

**We take delight to read God's Word;**

**We say, "Ah, yes, it's true!"**

**But it's of little use to us**

**Unless His will we do. —DJD**

*The signals of Scripture are meant for our protection, correction, and direction.*

## Obey The Call

Wednesday January 20, 2020

They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

—

Mark 1:18

### Today's Scripture:

Mark 1:16-20

I read about Captain Ray Baker who flew for the Strategic Air Command during the Vietnam War. The Air Force trained him, along with the other pilots, to run out of their barracks to their planes at the sound of a buzzer. Many times during dinner he had to drop his utensils and bolt to his bomber. He had been trained to respond to the call with immediate obedience. He was so well-trained that one day while on furlough, he ran out of a restaurant when he heard a buzzer.

When Jesus called His first followers, they had an immediacy in their response to His call. The call of these fishermen was abrupt. Yet “they immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Mark 1:18). The author of this account, Mark, may have wanted to impress upon his readers the authority of Jesus. When He extended the call, these men jumped to obey because helping people enter the kingdom of God was a more compelling adventure and a grander vision than catching fish.

When Jesus issues a call to follow Him, He doesn't want us to delay. He expects immediate obedience

when it comes to telling others the good news.

Bring someone the story of salvation today!

By: **Marvin Williams**

### Reflect & Pray

Go to the lost, in the home, in the mart, Delay no longer, today make a start; Tell them of Jesus who bled for their sin— From byways of darkness bring others to Him. —Houghton

Wanted: Messengers to deliver the good news.

## Brown Bag Witness

Thursday January 21, 2020

From you the word of the Lord has sounded forth .  
.. in every place. —

1 Thessalonians 1:8

### Today's Scripture:

1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

Ivan was a brilliant engineer, highly respected by his co-workers. But sometimes they called him “Deacon” or “Parson” because he had a deep religious faith and he didn’t hide it. Every day at lunch, for example, Ivan would bow his head over a little brown bag and thank God for his food.

Jean Zeiler, who worked with Ivan, was intrigued by his consistent testimony. She wanted to find out what made him so different. She found her answer in a book Ivan told her about—the Bible. After buying one and reading it three times, she came to know Jesus in a personal way.

Ivan told Jean, “I used to wonder if I would ever lead anyone to Christ.” But his quiet witness was not only the key to Jean’s salvation, it also challenges thousands as she travels throughout the world and gives her testimony.

The apostle Paul reminded the persecuted Thessalonian believers that their “faith toward God” was touching lives in far-off places (1 Th. 1:8). This must have encouraged them to remain faithful to the Savior.

Never underestimate the impact you can have for Christ. When you live for Him in your workplace or neighborhood, you will send forth a quiet message that will be heard.

Lord, help us to be consistent witnesses for You.

By: **Dennis J. DeHaan**

### Reflect & Pray

**Keeping in step with the Savior,  
Living a life that is true,  
Clearly let's sound out a witness,  
Proving what God's grace can do. —HGB**

*A quiet testimony is more convincing than a loud sermon.*

## Where Are The Fish?

Friday January 22, 2020

Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men. —

Mark 1:17

### Today's Scripture:

Mark 1:14-20

A pastor told me a fascinating story of a church in a Canadian fishing village. The founding fathers had chosen to build the church at the rocky edge of the Atlantic Ocean. Because it was located in the center of where the fishermen and townspeople lived, the church flourished.

As the congregation grew, however, the members decided to construct a new building far from the waterfront. Then an interesting thing happened. They seemed to lose their zeal for the lost after they moved. Why? Some said it was because they were no longer among the people.

We see in Mark 1 that Jesus began His ministry by walking along the Sea of Galilee and calling fishermen to be His disciples. He told them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men" (v.17).

Where are the "fish" in our communities? Do we expect them to come on their own to our church and hear the pastor present the gospel? Or have we chosen to follow Christ and become fishermen who dare to go to where the fish are, taking the message of life and hope to our schools and workplaces and neighborhoods?

Just as we won't catch fish in a kitchen sink, we can't "catch" souls if we don't go where they are.

By: **David C. Egner**

### Reflect & Pray

**You do not have to cross the seas  
Nor foreign lands explore  
To share God's Word with needy souls—  
You'll find them right next door. —Anon.**

*After accepting Christ's invitation to come, we must obey His commission to go.*

Connecting to Worship: January 24

Theme: "The One Worthy to Follow" – Mark 1:17-18

Readings: Jonah 3:1-5, 10, Psalm 62, 1 Corinthians 7:29-31, Mark 1:14-20

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## Connecting to Worship: January 31

**Theme: “The Authoritative Teacher” – Mark 1:27**

**Readings: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1 Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28**

### Retreat To Replenish

Monday January 25, 2020

He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed. —

Mark 1:35

#### Today's Scripture:

Mark 1:21-39

It had been a busy day for Jesus. He was visiting the seaside town of Capernaum, but it was no vacation.

First, He went to the synagogue and taught. While there, Jesus cast an unclean spirit out of a man.

From there it was a short walk to the home of one of His disciples, Peter, where Jesus healed the disciple's mother-in-law. Later that day, a huge crowd gathered at the door of the house, and Jesus spent a good portion of the evening healing the sick and driving out demons. Imagine the exhaustion Jesus must have felt as the last person walked away transformed.

Jesus deserved a day off or at least a chance to sleep in. But look at Mark 1:35. “Now in the morning, having risen a long while before daylight, He went out and departed to a solitary place; and there He prayed.”

Jesus knew His ministry would take Him to other towns and thousands more people who needed His healing hand. And to get ready, His top priority was to pray. With a tough day behind Him and more draining experiences ahead, Jesus got away from it all and prayed.

Did you have an incredibly busy day yesterday? Do you face another one today? Take time to get alone with God in prayer. He'll replenish your strength.

By: **Dave Branon**

#### Reflect & Pray

**I woke up quite early this morning  
And paused before going my way,  
I had so much work to accomplish  
I had to take time to pray! —Anon.**

*To stand up to any challenge, spend time on your knees.*

## A Good Teacher

Tuesday January 26, 2020

In all things [show] yourself to be a pattern of good works. —

Titus 2:7

### Today's Scripture:

#### Titus 2:1-10

While a student at Bryan College, I came to know Bible teacher Irving Jensen. He was well-known for his course on Bible-study methods, and he has published dozens of books and magazine articles on the subject. He believed deeply in what he taught and was a very effective and influential teacher.

Jensen was so effective because he lived what he taught. His speech was sometimes hesitant, and he didn't use flashy classroom techniques, but he loved his students and taught us to love the Word of God by the way he lived and what he taught. He lived out the words of Titus 2:7-8, "In all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you."

We are to back up what we say about Christ with a lifestyle that is above reproach and cannot be condemned by our enemies. Our lives are to be so exemplary that people around us are attracted to the truth about Christ (v.10).

Our words *and* our way of living should exemplify the message of Christ. By words and by deeds—that's how to be a good teacher.

By: **David C. Egner**

### Reflect & Pray

**A teacher is more than a person who knows,  
He instructs with his words and his ways;  
Lord, give us the grace to reveal who You are,  
And to model Your truth all our days. —Egner**

*A good teacher not only knows the way but shows  
the way.*

## Take The Time

Wednesday January 27, 2020

Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me. —

Mark 9:37

**Today's Scriptur:**  
**Matthew 9:18-26**

A legend is told about a rabbi from a small Jewish town. The people had gathered in the synagogue on the eve of Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement), but when the time came for the most important service of the Jewish year to begin, the rabbi was nowhere to be found.

During the delay, a young mother went home to check on her little daughter, whom she had left sleeping. To her surprise, she saw the rabbi sitting quietly in a chair, holding the child in his arms. He had been walking by her home on the way to the synagogue when he heard the infant crying and stopped to help. He held the little one until she fell asleep.

There's a lesson for us in this rabbi's example and in Jesus' love for people (Mt. 9:18-26). In our hectic and busy lives, we tend to get so caught up with our own concerns that we lose our sense of compassion for others. We must take time to observe and respond to individuals—whether they are little children, parents, or older believers.

Somewhere amid all the demands on you as a servant of Jesus Christ, take the time to hold the hand of an aging believer, to comfort a tired mother, or to cradle a child until she sleeps.

By: **David C. Egner**

### Reflect & Pray

**How good to be an instrument  
Of grace that He can use  
At any time, in any place,  
However He may choose! —Guirey**

*Great occasions for service come seldom—little ones surround us daily.*

## The Only One

Thursday January 28, 2020

The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers. —

1 Peter 3:12

### Today's Scripture:

#### Psalm 34

As a teacher with many years of experience in high school and college classrooms, I have observed many kinds of students. One in particular is what I call the “just me and the teacher” student. This pupil has a kind of one-on-one conversation with the teacher—almost as if no one else were in the class. The teacher’s rhetorical questions, for instance, result in verbal answers from this student—oblivious to anyone else’s reaction. While the class is filled with other pupils, this one seems to think it’s “just me and the teacher.”

As I watched one of these students recently and saw him command the teacher’s attention, I thought, *He’s on to something. He has the focus we all need to have when we pray.*

The thought that millions of other Christians are talking to God as we pray should never cause us to feel that we are less important. No, as we talk to our everywhere-present, all-knowing, all-powerful God, we can be confident that He is giving us His full attention. David said, “This poor man cried out, and the Lord heard him” (Psalm 34:6). God directs

single-minded attention toward our praise, our requests, and our concerns.

When you pray, to Him you are the only one.

By: **Dave Branon**

### Reflect & Pray

**So lift up your heart to the heavens;  
There's a loving and kind Father there  
Who offers release—comfort and peace—  
In the silent communion of prayer. —Anon.**

*Though millions are bending God's ear in prayer, He listens to each individually.*

## Fear And Love

Friday January 29, 2020

What does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear [Him] . . . and to love Him. —

Deuteronomy 10:12

### Today's Scripture:

Deuteronomy 10:12-17

Someone shared with me her observation about two bosses. One is loved but not feared by his subordinates. Because they love their boss but don't respect his authority, they don't follow his guidelines. The other boss is both feared and loved by those who serve under him, and their good behavior shows it.

The Lord desires that His people both fear and love Him too. Today's Bible passage, Deuteronomy 10, says that keeping God's guidelines involves both. In verse 12, we are told "to fear the Lord your God" and "to love Him."

To "fear" the Lord God is to give Him the highest respect. For the believer, it is not a matter of

feeling intimidated by Him or His character. But out of respect for His person and authority, we walk in all His ways and keep His commandments. Out of "love," we serve Him with all our heart and with all our soul—rather than merely out of duty (v.12).

Love flows out of our deep gratitude for His love for us, rather than out of our likes and dislikes. "We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Our fear and love for God enable us to walk willingly in obedience to God's law.

By: **Albert Lee**

### Reflect & Pray

Lord, You are holy and Your thoughts are much higher than mine. I bow before You. Thank You for salvation in Jesus. I love You and want to obey You with all of my heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Amen.

If we fear and love God, we will obey Him.

Connecting to Worship: January 31

Theme: "The Authoritative Teacher" – Mark 1:27

Readings: Deuteronomy 18:15-20, Psalm 111, 1

Corinthians 8:1-13, Mark 1:21-28

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## Connecting to Worship: February 7

**Theme: “The Great Physician” – Mark 1:30-31**

**Readings: Isaiah 40:21-31, Psalm 147:1-11, 1 Corinthians 9:16-27, Mark 1:29-39**

### The Ultimate Physician

Monday February 1, 2020

I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold. —

Luke 19:8

#### Today's Scripture:

Luke 19:1-10

Physicians can cure many illnesses, both physical and mental. But only Jesus can bring about the healing that makes bad people good.

A noted psychiatrist recognized his own limitations in a conversation he had with British clergyman William Barclay. “All that a psychiatrist can do,” said the doctor, “is strip a man naked until you get to the essential man; and if the essential man is bad stuff, there’s nothing you can do about it. That’s where *you* come in.” Barclay later commented, “I think he meant that this is where *Jesus* comes in.”

Zacchaeus was a bad man who needed inner healing. As a chief tax collector, he could take a cut from what his subordinates had collected. Therefore he was a wealthy man. Apparently he had heard about Jesus and wanted very much to see Him. Being short in stature, he climbed up into a tree to see above the crowd.

I believe Zacchaeus was overwhelmed with guilt when Jesus looked up and told him He was coming to his house. Later, he told Jesus he would give half his wealth to the poor and restore fourfold to any he had defrauded. Jesus said, “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:9). In that instant Zacchaeus was spiritually healed. Only the ultimate Physician can make bad people good.

By: **Herbert Vander Lugt**

#### Reflect & Pray

**Jesus came to seek and save the lost,  
Left heaven's glory, minding not the cost;  
Looking high and low and far and wide,  
The Son of Man for all was crucified. —Hess**

*The ultimate Physician can reach you wherever you are.*

## Christmas—God’s Cure

Tuesday February 2, 2020

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. —

John 1:17

### Today's Scripture:

John 1:10-18

If your physician called you and in a serious voice said, “Please come in as soon as you can. I have something to discuss with you,” you would know he has bad news! Your first response might be, “No, I don’t want to know.” But you go because it is only when you know the diagnosis that you can learn the cure.

God, our Great Physician, also has some bad news—about man’s spiritual condition. When against His expressed warning Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, God told Adam that all mankind would die spiritually and physically. That’s the bad news.

But He also gave the solution. He promised a Savior (Gen. 3:15). The apostle John tells us, “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). But how does that help? Jesus came that first Christmas to bring God’s grace, something that none of us deserve because like Adam we have all sinned. But Jesus also came to reverse what sin brought. He came to be the truth (John 14:6) that would bring us back to God. He came to “save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21).

Listen to what the Great Physician has to say in the Bible about your spiritual condition. Then accept the cure He has provided—the gift of salvation through Christ.

By: **C. P. Hia**

### Reflect & Pray

Life is uncertain, Death is sure; Sin the cause, Christ the cure. —Anon.

Spiritual blindness can be cured only by the Great Physician.

## The Great Creator-Healer

Wednesday February 3, 2020

I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. —

Psalm 139:14

### Today's Scripture & Insight:

#### Psalm 139:1-16

A few years ago, I had a rather serious skiing accident and severely tore the muscles in one of my legs. In fact, my doctor told me that the tear caused excessive bleeding. The healing process was slow, but during that time of waiting I found myself in awe of our great Creator (see Col. 1:16).

I've wrinkled a few car fenders in my lifetime and dropped more than one dish. They've always stayed broken. Not so with my leg. As soon as the tearing of my muscles occurred, the internal healing mechanisms that Christ created in my body went to work. Invisibly, down deep in my throbbing leg, the medics of His marvelous design were mending the tear. Before long, I was up and running again with a whole new sense of what the psalmist meant when he said that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made," and my heart was filled with praise (Ps. 139:14).

Sometimes it takes something like an injury or a sickness to remind us of the masterful design that we carry around in our bodies. So the next time you face an unwanted interruption—no matter its cause—focus your attention on Jesus' wonderful

love and let Him lift your heart to grateful worship in the midst of the pain!

By: **Joe Stowell**

### Reflect & Pray

Lord, help us to see beyond the moments of our lives  
and to delve deeply into Your marvelous handiwork  
and perfect design. Forgive us for our short-sightedness  
and teach us to see You in every circumstance.  
Worship of the masterful Creator begins with a grateful heart.

## The Great Physician

Thursday February 4, 2020

He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses. —

Matthew 8:17

### Today's Scripture:

John 9:1-7

In reflecting on his deteriorating health, John Donne (1572–1631) described his feelings as physicians examined him to find “the root and occasion” of a serious illness. In hushed tones, they discussed their conclusions outside his room.

At first Donne was afraid, but in time he saw compassion in their faces and began to trust them. Their concern reminded Donne that he could trust the Great Physician. As he read the Gospels, he saw God the Father’s face in the tender, compassionate face of Jesus.

Many of us struggle with our thoughts about God, especially during illness. Perhaps we grew up attending a church that portrayed an angry God who inflicted sickness on us. Can we trust Him? Like Donne, we turn to the Gospels for our reason to trust God. And we find it in His Son Jesus, who was unfailingly compassionate toward those who were afflicted, regardless of the reason.

So we pray as Donne prayed, “Deliver me, therefore, O my God, from these vain imaginations”—the belief that by our sin we have

forfeited God’s goodness and mercy. As Donne wisely said, the Great Physician “knows our natural infirmities, for He had them, and knows the weight of our sins, for He paid a dear price for them.”

By: **David H. Roper**

### Reflect & Pray

**The cross of Jesus is the supreme evidence of the love of God. —Oswald Chambers**

## Our Demanding Schedules

Friday February 5, 2020

The whole city was gathered together at the door.  
Then He healed many. —

Mark 1:33-34

### Today's Scripture:

Mark 1:32-39

Is your life too busy? Business deadlines, productivity quotas, and shuttling children to lessons and sporting events can really fill up your schedule. It's easy to think, *If only I didn't have so many responsibilities, then I could walk in vital union with God.*

Yet C. S. Lewis wisely points out that no one was busier than Christ. "Our model is the Jesus . . . of the workshop, the roads, the crowds, the clamorous demands and surly oppositions, the lack of all peace and privacy, the interruptions. For this . . . is the Divine life operating under human conditions."

We read of Jesus in Capernaum: "At evening, when the sun had set, they brought to Him all who were sick and those who were demon-possessed. And

the whole city was gathered together at the door. Then He healed many" (Mark 1:32-34). The next day Christ sought out a solitary place and prayed. There He received direction from His Father to pursue a demanding ministry in another place. Our Lord communed with His Father and depended on the Spirit to minister through Him.

Is your schedule demanding? Follow the example of Jesus and set aside a specific time for prayer. Then depend upon God's power to help you meet each day's demands.

By: **Dennis Fisher**

### Reflect & Pray

**The many tasks we face each day  
Can burden and oppress,  
But spending time with God each day  
Can bring relief from stress. —Sper**

*To keep your life in balance, lean on the Lord.*

Connecting to Worship: February 7

Theme: "The Great Physician" – Mark 1:30-31

Readings: Isaiah 40:21-31, Psalm 147:1-11, 1

Corinthians 9:16-27, Mark 1:29-39

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## Connecting to Worship: February 14

**Theme: "The Son of God" – Mark 9:7-8**

**Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-12, Psalm 50:1-6, , 2 Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6, Mark 9:2-9**

### Out of Focus

Monday February 8, 2020

Bible in a Year:

- [2 Samuel 19-20](#)
- [Luke 18:1-23](#)

Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here." —

[Matthew 17:4](#)

**Today's Scripture:**

[Matthew 17:1-8](#)

On the back of the pulpit in the church I used to attend were printed these words: "Sir, we would see Jesus!" They were a reminder to the minister that he must never allow anything—no matter how good or interesting—to distract him from focusing on the Savior.

Peter, James, and John needed this reminder too when they witnessed Jesus' transfiguration and the appearance of Moses and Elijah. Commenting on this account, J. B. Nicholson suggests that when Peter said, "Lord, it is good for us," he was focusing on the wonderful experience. Nicholson then says, "Peter was sidetracked, and the Father had to open heaven and speak to him. He said, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him.'" God put the focus where it belonged, on Christ.

Sin diverts some believers from focusing on Jesus. Too much study and feverish activity distracts others. Such things as doctrines and church attendance, good as they are, must not become our main concerns. We are to keep Jesus at the center of our spiritual attention.

Is the Lord Jesus Christ the primary object of your love and devotion?

By: **Henry G. Bosch**

### Reflect & Pray

**I could never live without Him,  
Live without His love and grace;  
I could never find another  
Who could ever take His place. —Anon.**

*Unless Christ is the center of interest, your life will  
be out of focus.*

## Overcoming Evil With Good

Tuesday February 9, 2020

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. —

Romans 12:21

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 9:51-56

Jesus was passing through Samaria on His way to Jerusalem. He sent messengers ahead to prepare a place, but the villagers rejected Him.

When James and John heard about the refusal, they fumed, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?” (Luke 9:54). They had just been on the Mount of Transfiguration and had seen their Lord with Moses and Elijah. No doubt they recalled the story of Elijah calling down fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:9-12). But when they asked for a consuming fire, Jesus corrected them.

He told them, “The Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them” (Luke 9:56). It is not our business to seek vengeance. God treads the winepress of His wrath alone (Isa. 63:3). Our business is to bring the good news of salvation to the world.

Paul wrote, “Do not avenge yourselves . . . for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you

will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:19-21). We must leave vengeance with God.

Jesus calls us to treat difficult people with kindness and to seek to bring them to Him.

By: **David H. Roper**

### Reflect & Pray

**When anger springs up in my heart, dear Lord,  
Because of the evil I see,  
Help me to channel the wrath that I feel  
And do something noble for Thee. —Branon**

*God’s wrath and mercy are both seen in the cross  
of Calvary.*

## Losing And Finding Our Lives In Him

Wednesday February 10, 2020

For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. —

Luke 9:24

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 9:18-27

When Mother Teresa died in 1997, people marveled again at her example of humble service to Christ and to people in great need. She had spent 50 years ministering to the poor, sick, orphaned, and dying through the Missionaries of Charity in Calcutta, India.

After extensive interviews with her, British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge wrote: "There is much talk today about discovering an identity, as though it were something to be looked for, like a winning number in a lottery; then, once found, to be hoarded and treasured. Actually, . . . the more it is spent the richer it becomes. So, with Mother Teresa, in effacing herself, she becomes herself. I never met anyone more memorable."

I suspect that many of us may be afraid of what will happen if we obey Jesus' words: "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

Our Savior reminded His followers that He came to give us life abundantly (John 10:10). We are called to lose our lives for Christ, and in so doing discover the fullness of life in Him.

By: **David C. McCasland**

### Reflect & Pray

"Take up thy cross and follow Me,"  
I hear the blessed Savior call;  
How can I make a lesser sacrifice  
When Jesus gave His all? —Ackley  
As we lose our lives for Christ, we find fullness of  
life in Him.

## Our Measured Life

Thursday February 11, 2020

Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom. —

Psalm 90:12

### Today's Scripture:

Psalm 90:1-17

The root meaning of the word translated number in “teach us to number our days” (Ps. 90:12) is “to weigh” or “to measure.” We are to place each day in the balance and make it tip the scales in a way that will bring glory to God and blessing to the lives of others.

When the great artist Raphael died at the early age of 37, friends and relatives carried his marvelous but unfinished painting The Transfiguration in the funeral procession. His family felt that because of the limited time he was allotted to use his creative genius, the painting was an appropriate symbol of his unfulfilled earthly aspirations.

That half-completed picture has another meaning—a message that should impress itself on all of us: Life is fleeting and death may come unexpectedly. We should treasure each hour as a gift of great value and use it to the best advantage.

If we realize the value of our days, we will try to spend them profitably. To have no regrets at life's end and have much reward in heaven, we must make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-16).

In the words of the psalmist let us pray, “Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12).

By: **Henry G. Bosch**

### Reflect & Pray

**The clock of life is wound but once,  
And no man has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop,  
At late or early hour. —Anon.**

*Instead of counting the days, make your days  
count.*

## True Greatness

Friday February 12, 2020

Now it happened on the next day, when they had come down from the mountain, that a great multitude met Him. —

Luke 9:37

### Today's Scripture:

Luke 9:28-29,34-42

On the 50th anniversary of Sir Edmund Hillary's historic ascent of Mt. Everest, a television newsman said that much of Hillary's status as a hero in Nepal was "not about what he did when he stood on top of the world, but what he did when he came back down." After conquering the world's highest mountain with his climbing companion Tenzing Norgay in 1953, Edmund spent the next five decades helping to build schools, hospitals, and bridges for the Sherpa community.

The contrast between Edmund Hillary's moment on the mountain and his service in the valley brought to mind Jesus' experience on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). It was a pinnacle of blessing when our Lord's appearance became radiant and the Father said, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" (v.35).

But Jesus didn't stay on the mountain. He came down to the crowd, where He freed a boy from an evil spirit. He was determined to go to Jerusalem

and fulfill His mission, where He would willingly die on the cross for our sins.

Jesus told His disciples, "He who is least among you all will be great" (v.48). Our Lord's life shows us that true greatness is found in humbly serving God and others in the valley of need.

By: **David C. McCasland**

### Reflect & Pray

**Whether on the mountaintop  
Or the valley down below,  
True greatness is in serving  
Wherever we may go. —D. De Haan**

*In God's eyes, true greatness is serving others.*

Connecting to Worship: February 14

Theme: "The Son of God" – Mark 9:7-8

Readings: 2 Kings 2:1-12, Psalm 50:1-6, , 2

Corinthians 3:12-13, 4:1-6, Mark 9:2-9