

This Is Your Life, Jesus!

John 1:1-15

April 28, 2019

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Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of April 28, 2019

Weekly Prayer: Come, Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Enter into our darkness with your light. Come fill our emptiness with your presence. Dispel the clouds and reveal your glory. Come refresh, renew, restore us. Come Lord, come down, come in, come among us. Open our eyes and hearts to see how Jesus lived and loved so that we too may be recipients and givers of that same love. Amen.

Monday, April 29

Scripture: John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Observation: John's prelude was like a great musical overture. The first three words—"In the beginning"—were the first of many allusions in the gospel to Genesis 1-2. John wanted us to see that Jesus the creator was creating anew. The "life" and "light" images were also from those "beginning" stories, with the added insight that since the beginning the world had grown dark. Into this dark world, Jesus brought inextinguishable life and light for all who trusted in him.

Application: "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn't extinguish the light" (verse 5). So many kinds of darkness try to put out the light in our lives—the death of someone we love, a broken relationship, facing unfair or abusive treatment, financial uncertainty and fear, and many more. What does it mean to you that Jesus' light keeps shining even at those times? How can you keep your spiritual eyes open to receive Jesus' light?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, give me "eyes to see" the light of how much you love and value me as I read your story again in John's gospel this Lenten season. Amen.

Tuesday, April 30

Scripture: John 1:6-18

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. 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. (John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'") Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. For the law was given through Moses; grace and

truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.

Observation: The Greek and Roman gods usually showed little interest in human beings' day-to-day concerns. John said "the Word" was utterly different. He gave all who believed in him the right to become children of God. "The Word became flesh and made his home among us"—neither Greeks nor Jews believed God could bridge a gap that wide. But John said the light wasn't just about God—the light was God himself, one of us yet so much more than just one of us.

Application: Being born is the way each one of us enters into the world to begin a new life. John, taking his cue from Jesus (John 3:3-8), said the quality of life Jesus brought is so fresh and filled with divine energy it's like being born anew as a child of God. When did your spiritual journey start? In what ways has walking with Jesus given you a whole new life?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for becoming flesh, and for giving me the authority and power to be born anew as a child of God. Thank you for my new life. Amen.

Wednesday, May 1

Scripture: Matthew 3:13-17

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Observation: John (who called people to repent, and baptized them when they did) tried to stop Jesus from being baptized. He had said that the one coming after him would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire" (Matthew 3:11). He saw Jesus as that sinless savior, and felt unworthy. But Jesus said, "This is necessary to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus modeled baptism for us. We value our baptisms as a sign that we choose to follow Jesus, and let him direct our lives.

Application: Baptism is a type of washing. We come to God tired and defiled and are washed clean, given a fresh start. Jesus did not need that kind of baptism—he was sinless. Yet he humbly asked to be baptized anyway. Jesus did "what was necessary for us, humbling himself and identifying with our humanity (see Philippians 2:5-11, Hebrews 2:11-18). What does that tell you about how much he values you?

Prayer: Lord, I yearn to be connected to you and what you've been doing throughout human history. I give myself anew to you today. Amen

Thursday, May 2

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" Then the devil took

him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down. For it is written: ‘He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’” Jesus answered him, “It is also written: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. “All this I will give you,” he said, “if you will bow down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’” Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

Observation: God’s people, Israel, wandered in the desert for 40 years before they entered the Promised Land. The Israelites gave into the temptation to distrust God (see Numbers 14:28-34). Jesus, God’s son, spent 40 days and nights in the wilderness. He, too, was tempted, but did not succumb. He loved and trusted God, and built his life on the Bible’s principles.

Application: Unlike Jesus, you’ve probably never been tempted to turn stones to bread. The temptation “fit” him—he could use his power to be the political, material kind of messiah most Israelites hoped for. In what ways have you been tempted to use your unique abilities and powers for our own glory and advancement, rather than to bless others and build God’s kingdom?

Prayer: Lord, every day I’m tempted to take my eyes off you. Please help me treasure your word enough to learn it, and bring it to my mind when I need to resist temptation. Amen.

Friday, May 3

Scripture: Luke 19:1-7

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

Observation: Jesus openly bucked social boundaries, saying, “Zacchaeus, come down at once. I must stay in your home today.” He offered this outcast man personal friendship and kindness, made real as he accepted Zacchaeus’ hospitality. No doubt when Jesus stopped under the tree and called his name, many thought, “Now Zacchaeus is going to catch it.” They grumbled when, instead, Jesus just went to eat at Zacchaeus’ house (verse 7). But Jesus knew that love and kindness, not harsh condemnation, were more likely to redirect Zacchaeus’ life. In verse 3, Zacchaeus “was trying to see who Jesus was.” By verse 6 (maybe after nearly falling out of the tree in surprise when Jesus spoke to him!), he was “happy to welcome Jesus.”

Application: What role, if any, did curiosity play in drawing you to consider Jesus’ claim on your life? What can you do, individually or through your church’s ministries, to create healthy curiosity in others about your faith? In what ways can you and your congregation make it clear that we serve a Lord who welcomed (and welcomes) “sinners”?

Prayer: Lord God, at whatever points you call my name, help me respond as Zacchaeus did, happy to welcome you into another aspect of my life. Amen.

Saturday, May 4

Scripture: Luke 19:8-10

But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Observation: Jesus did many admirable things during his ministry on earth. He healed the sick, broke down barriers of prejudice and exclusion, and taught people how to live better lives by accepting God as their true king. He told the grumbling crowd (many of whom Zacchaeus had probably cheated) that he "came to seek and save the lost." That was his central, guiding mission—to restore and set right all the brokenness created by evil.

Application: In Luke 19:10, Jesus said he "came to seek and save the lost." Scholar William Barclay wrote, "In the New Testament 'lost' does not mean damned or doomed. It just means in the wrong place... A man is lost when he has wandered away from God; and he is found when once again he takes his rightful place as an obedient child in the...family of his Father." Were you ever "lost"? If so, in what ways did God help you be "found"? How can you join God in helping others who are lost find their way home?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, thank you for coming "to seek and save the lost," including me. Help me to join you in doing that. Amen.