

My Prayer Journal

Use this weekly prayer to help you begin your time with God each day.

Prayer of Confession:

Holy God, remind us today of the great hope of eternal life which You have set before us. We feel within our hearts a longing for the light that shines in the darkness – a longing for You. We give You thanks for the gift of Jesus and for the Holy Spirit who empowers us to be Your witnesses. We pray that You would be our light today and always. Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

Everything in the Bible leads up to the story of Jesus' Resurrection! We usually think about celebrating the Resurrection at Easter, but actually, we celebrate it every Sunday! Because Jesus was raised from the dead on a Sunday, we meet every Sunday to remember that amazing day! Everything changed for Jesus' friends when they realized He was alive again. They knew that God will make the most wonderful things happen even after things seem terrible. They were so happy, they couldn't wait to tell everyone they met about what God had done. How would you act if you were that happy about Jesus' Resurrection?

MONDAY 7.20.20

Mark 16:1-8

This week, we begin by reading each of the four Gospel presentations of the discovery of Jesus' empty tomb. As you read each day, consider the differences in how the four Gospel writers tell the story. The story of Jesus was passed orally for many years before being written down, and even in the vitally important story of the first discovery of the empty tomb, the narratives vary in the details. We read Mark first because most scholars agree it is the first Gospel to have been written, anywhere from 20 to 35 years after the Resurrection. Mark gives the core of the oral tradition about Jesus—when the Sabbath was over, three women take spices to anoint his body. They worry about rolling away the stone, but discover it already moved. A young man in white, inside the tomb, tells them Jesus has risen, shows them where He had lain, and tells them to go tell the other disciples to go to meet Him in Galilee. Surprisingly, according to Mark, the afraid and bewildered women flee, telling no one what they have seen.

- What do you imagine your own reaction to these events would have been?
- Would there be at least a glimmer of hope based on the young man's testimony?

TUESDAY 7.21.20

Matthew 28:1-20

Notice the variations and additions to Mark's version of the story. Only two women visit the tomb—Salome does not appear to be present. A reason for the stone's move is provided—an angel rolls back the stone, creating an earthquake. It is this angel, sitting on the stone, who greets the women and delivers the news that Jesus is risen, rather than a young man inside the tomb. Guards, who are not mentioned in Mark, are paralyzed by the angel's presence. And even though they are afraid, the women hurry to tell the disciples, but are met by the risen Jesus. Although they want to worship Him, He reiterates the angels' direction to go to Galilee where Jesus will meet them. An additional story is given to explain a rumor that circulated that Jesus' disciples stole His body, as well as a concluding narrative that shows that the disciples did in fact return to Galilee, where Jesus met them and delivered to them the Great Commission to “go and make disciples of all nations.”

- What do Matthew's additional details add to the story? What kind of questions from Mark's version do they answer?
- What questions would you still have after reading Matthew's Gospel?

WEDNESDAY 7.22.20

Luke 24:1-53

Like Mark, there is no mention in Luke of how the stone was moved. But rather than a single man, or angel, *two* men “suddenly appear” in the tomb. Not only do they tell the women that Jesus is risen, they remind them of Jesus' own prophetic words with regard to what has happened. Although neither these men nor the resurrected Jesus tell the women to go tell the disciples what they have witnessed, they do! Numerous women, including others not mentioned by Matthew or Mark, tell their story to the Eleven, most of whom write it off as nonsense. Luke tells us that Peter, though, rushed to the tomb, and found only the burial cloths. Luke then adds several post-resurrection stories. Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and when they tell the Eleven, we learn that Jesus has also already appeared to Simon, even though that story itself has not been told. Jesus then appears to the entire group, encourages them to touch Him, and eats fish with them. After encouraging them to preach His message to all nations, Jesus ascends into heaven.

- Notice how Luke emphasizes people sharing their story of encounter with the risen Jesus. Why do you think he does that? Are you as willing to share your faith story?

THURSDAY 7.23.20

John 20:1-21:25

John's version of the story is very different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and much longer. Mary Magdalene, alone, discovers the tomb with the stone rolled away. Rather than enter, she runs to Peter and another, unnamed disciple (traditionally John, the author), who in turn run to the tomb. Peter enters to find the burial cloths (as Luke has described), followed by John. After Peter and John leave, Mary Magdalene sees two angels sitting where Jesus' head and foot would have been. Rather than announce that Jesus is risen, they simply ask her why she is crying, and she turns to find Jesus. John then goes on to relate several additional detailed resurrection appearances—to the disciples without Thomas, again with Thomas, and by the Sea of Galilee where He shares a meal with the disciples. The Gospel ends with the beautiful story of Jesus' forgiveness and reconciliation with Peter.

- What do you think accounts for the differences in the way the Gospels tell the story? Do the differences affect your ability to believe? Or do the differences provide you with multiple perspectives from which to relate to the events?
- Which telling of the story resonates best with you?

FRIDAY 7.24.20

Acts 2:22-41

Today's reading contains the first record we have of a disciple sharing the Resurrection story among his fellow Jews in Jerusalem. Peter stands up on the day of Pentecost, and begins by acknowledging the bare facts—Jesus was put to death by crucifixion, but God raised Him from the dead. Peter then goes on to place the events within the context of Jewish history and prophecy. Psalms of David are used to demonstrate that all of this is the fulfillment of God's plan of salvation. Jesus IS the long-awaited Messiah (or Christ). Peter proclaims Jesus' own message—repent of sin—and then is obedient to Jesus' final Great Commission—baptizing, in Jesus' name, those who accept his message. All of this has been done subsequent to the coming of the Holy Spirit in power upon the disciples, and Peter promises those baptized that this gift is for them, as well. In fact, the promise of the Holy Spirit is also for those "who are far off—whom the Lord our God will call." That means you, and all of us.

- Why do you think Peter's words had such an impact—"cutting them to the heart"?
- How does Peter's speech provide hope to those who were listening? Does it provide hope for you?

SATURDAY 7.25.20

Acts 26:1-32

Many years later, Paul was imprisoned in Caesarea. He had been interrogated by Festus, the Roman governor of Judea, but Paul appealed to Caesar, in Rome, when it appeared he might have to go to Jerusalem to stand trial. Shortly after, Herod Agrippa, who had ruled the area around Galilee, and was the primary liaison between the Jewish religious leadership and the Roman government, visited Felix and asked to see Paul. After telling his own story of conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul proclaims his own belief in the Resurrection, and encourages Festus and Agrippa to believe as well. While neither becomes a believer, they agree that Paul had done nothing worthy of imprisonment. Appeals to Caesar had to be honored, though, so Paul shipped out for Rome.

- What do you think gave Paul the courage to proclaim the gospel even to two of the highest ranking, most powerful officials, in all of Judea?
- The Resurrection of Jesus reminds us that in God, nothing is hopeless. There is always a good ending to any story written with Christ at its center. How is the story of your life centered on Christ, and how are you doing at holding on to the hope of a good ending?



Daily Study Guide

July 19-25, 2020

Sermon Series: Writing a Comeback Story

Week Two: "Wait! It Gets Better!" - Rev. J. David Israel

Scripture for Sunday, July 19: Luke 24:36-49

"While they were saying these things, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" They were terrified and afraid. They thought they were seeing a ghost. He said to them, 'Why are you startled? Why are doubts arising in your hearts? Look at my hands and feet. It's really me! Touch me and see, for a ghost doesn't have flesh and bones like you see I have. As He said this, He showed them His hands and feet. Because they were wondering and questioning in the midst of their happiness, He said to them, 'Do you have anything to eat?' They gave Him a piece of baked fish. Taking it, He ate it in front of them. Jesus said to them, 'These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law from Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the scriptures. He said to them, 'This is what is written: the Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and a change of heart and life for the forgiveness of sins must be preached in His name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. Look, I'm sending to you what my Father promised, but you are to stay in the city until you have been furnished with heavenly power.'" (CEB)

Things that really impacted me from today's sermon:

Prayer Requests

- Jerry Davis
- Nancy Davis
- Claudia McManomy
- Shirley Vaughn
- Beverly McIntosh
- Clella Malloy
- Jerry Kohl
- Martha Kohl
- Ruth Killian
- Ann Mordt
- Ken Mann
- Carolyn Mann
- Doug Nash
- Charlotte Ottley
- Vicki Robinson
- Delaney Digman
- Bill Reichter
- Bob Vincent
- Peggy Cruse
- Bill Cruse
- Sophia Miller
- Judy Hoffman
- Nini Schneider

Everyone affected by the COVID-19 outbreak

Our communities suffering from the violence

Our community, country and world

The Jones family on the loss of William H. (Bill) Jones, father of Jim Jones

The Labbe and Steurer families on the loss of Richard Labbe, brother of Barbara Steurer

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org