

My Prayer Journal

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

Prayer of Confession: Generous God, whose giving knows neither measure nor end, we confess that all too often we have kept our own hearts and hands firmly closed. Our own wants and wishes have led us to ignore the needs and concerns of others. Forgive us Father. Help us to transcend self-centeredness, greed, and fear, and to always to feel, think, and act as those who know the hope that is rooted in the generous giving of God. We pray in the Name of Jesus Christ our Lord, Amen.

My Prayers this Week:

Family Time:

One of the most important decisions every single human being has to make at some point in their life is the answer to the question that Jesus asked His disciples: “Who do you say I am?” All of us have to decide what we are going to believe about who Jesus is. Jesus used a lot of different word pictures to describe who He says He is: the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the gate for sheep, the Good Shepherd, the resurrection and the life, the way, the truth, and the life, and the true vine. Each word picture tells us a little more about how Jesus claimed He could help us to live the way God wants us to. Jesus taught His disciples that everything He said really was true, and that they could trust every single thing He said. The Bible invites us to believe Him, too—but each one of us has to decide whether or not to. Talk to your parents and LWKids leaders about who they say Jesus is, to help you discover who He is, too!

MONDAY 3.27.23

John 8:12-30

At this point in our 40 days with Jesus, we have read about the prophecies of Jesus’ birth, His earliest proclamations of repentance of sin, the calling of disciples to follow Him, the content of His teaching, His ministries of healing, and we have seen how He interacted with different people He encountered during His travels. This week, we will turn to the unique way Jesus teaches about His personal identity in the Gospel of John through His “I Am” statements. The first of these seven statements was the subject of yesterday’s sermon—“I am the Bread of Life.” Today, we read that Jesus says, “I am the Light of the World.” If we look back at the beginning of Chapter 7, we see that the setting for this teaching is the Feast of Tabernacles, at which time enormous lampstands were erected to remind the people of God’s guidance and deliverance by a pillar of fire during their desert wanderings after their escape from Egypt. Note that the language Jesus uses here is of *following* the light, as the ancient Israelites did in the desert, rather than of “receiving” or “living in” the light. Light was also a frequent symbol for God’s presence in the anticipated “last days” - see Isaiah 60:19-20. The meaning of Jesus’ words is clear—in Him, God is here, and we should follow Him.

- What is your answer to the question, “Who is Jesus?”

TUESDAY 3.28.23

John 10:1-10

Two of Jesus’ “I Am” statements come very close together in John 10. While the word picture is similar in the two, the meanings behind them are actually quite different. Today, we read the first of the two, in which Jesus makes the claim, “I am the gate for the sheep ... whoever enters through me will be saved.” In the ancient world of sheep-raising, the sheep pen was the one place in which the sheep were completely safe. Sheep were free to graze during the day, but at night, or at other times of potential danger, the shepherd would lead the sheep to their place of safety in the pen, whose gate could easily be locked or barricaded. When the gate was open, passage into the place of safety was easy, but when it was not, the only way in would be to climb over the walls ... and the only one who would do that would be someone out to rob the sheep from their owner. By making the claim, “I am the gate for sheep,” Jesus is saying that the way into a place of absolute safety and security is through Him. Being led astray by others, who do not come through Jesus, but “climb over the walls,” so to speak, will lead to disaster. Only Jesus provides the way of access to God the Father, to the place of safety and security that the prophets had long promised would arrive in “the last days.”

- What “thieves” offer the false promise of security today?

WEDNESDAY 3.29.23

John 10:11-21

Immediately after proclaiming that He is the gate for the sheep, Jesus also says “I am the Good Shepherd.” The Old Testament backdrop for all of John 10 can be found in Ezekiel 34, in which God proclaims woes upon the “shepherds” of Israel who only take care of themselves, while ignoring their flocks. As a result, Ezekiel prophesies, God Himself will come to rescue His sheep and look after them. Notice, then, that these words from Jesus in John 10 flow directly out of the previous chapter, in which the Pharisees have failed to be a shepherd for the man born blind whom Jesus healed. In claiming to be “the Good Shepherd,” Jesus is clearly identifying Himself with the role that God Himself takes in Ezekiel’s prophecy. As the Good Shepherd, Jesus will not only take care of His flock, but will lay down His life to save the sheep. This imagery was very familiar in Jesus’ day, when shepherds really were expected to place themselves in harm’s way between an attacking animal and the sheep whose job it was for them to protect. Jesus explains that He assumes this role willingly, fully expecting to lay down His life for His sheep. And in one of Jesus’ earliest and clearest references to Gentiles being included in His care, He says He has sheep who are “not of this pen.”

- Why do you think Jesus’ words created division?

THURSDAY 3.30.23

John 11:17-44

The setting for the fifth of Jesus’ “I Am” statements is the home of Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, who had just died. Being very close to the large city of Jerusalem, many visitors had come to provide comfort to the sisters. When Jesus arrives, His first words of comfort are “Your brother will rise again.” Martha’s response helps us to see that belief in a general resurrection at the last days was commonly held by the Jews in that time—but what Martha doesn’t realize is that Lazarus’ death has given Jesus the opportunity for a deeper teaching. Although Martha knows that “he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day,” Jesus proclaims “I am the resurrection and the life”! In other words, Jesus says, what you are hoping for in the last days, I am *now*! The power to initiate new, eternal, life, starting here and now, resides in Jesus Himself, and the power to sustain that life resides in Him as well: Jesus *is* the Resurrection, and Jesus *is* the life! The raising of Lazarus is the proof of the truth of Jesus’ claim. It is the last miracle Jesus will perform in the Gospel of John, and it will serve to further agitate those who are seeking Jesus’ death. But as the climax to the miracles in John, in Jesus’ last miracle, humanity’s last enemy, death, is overthrown.

- Are you expecting a new life here, and now, in Jesus?

FRIDAY 3.31.23

John 14:1-14

Both of Jesus' final two "I Am" statements take place at the Last Supper in John's Gospel. Prior to the events in today's reading, the disciples have arrived for the meal, Jesus has washed their feet, He has predicted both Judas' betrayal and Peter's denial, and He has given them the "new command" to love one another. It is when Jesus tells the disciples that while they cannot follow Him now, they know the way to where He is going, that Thomas sets the stage for Jesus' next "I am" statement by insisting, "Lord we don't know where you're going, how can we know the way?" Jesus tells him, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." Jesus is making the bold assertion that He is *the* mediator between the Holy God to whom He is returning and a sinful humanity. The disciples "know the way" to where Jesus is going (to God), because they know Jesus. The words Jesus has spoken, and the words He is about to speak, to them embody truth as it has never been spoken before, and are the only source of life for those who are bound for death apart from Him. No one comes to the Father except through Jesus. For those who believe Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, the call to evangelize the world could not be clearer.

- What makes this claim of Jesus hard for the world to accept?

SATURDAY 4.1.23

John 15:1-17

Jesus' final "I Am" statement comes later in the Last Supper meal, in the midst of Jesus' teaching about the coming of the Holy Spirit. It is the only "I Am" statement that includes an additional statement about who God the Father is! "I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener." We need to understand that in the Old Testament, Israel has often been represented as a vine or a vineyard under God's management—see Hosea 10:1, Isaiah 5:1-7, Jeremiah 2:21, and/or Ezekiel 15:1-5. These prophets, and then Jesus in His teaching, insisted that Israel had failed in its calling to be a vine that is fruitful for God. Jesus, though serves this purpose, in fulfillment of the expectation of Psalm 80:14-19! Remember that the branches are *part* of the vine, that the vine encompasses all its branches, not just its root. This is why Jesus commands His disciples, "Remain in Me" - He is the vine that we, the branches, must not only be "attached" to, but actually *part of*—"in" the vine who is Jesus. The only way this can be accomplished, Jesus says, is by loving each other as Jesus has loved us. We have been chosen and appointed to "go and bear fruit." We have been chosen and appointed to "Love each other." We only bear fruit when we love the world as Jesus loved us.

- Which "I Am" statement connects most deeply with you?



Daily Study Guide

March 26-April 1, 2023

Sermon Series: 40 Days with Jesus

Week Five: "Bread and Light" - Rev. Gregory P. Finrock

Scripture for Sunday, March 26: John 6:45-69 (CEB)

It is written in the Prophets, And they will all be taught by God Everyone who has listened to the Father and learned from Him comes to me. No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God. He has seen the Father. I assure you, whoever believes has eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate manna in the wilderness and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven so that whoever eats from it will never die. I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever, and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh." Then the Jews debated among themselves, asking, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" Jesus said to them, "I assure you, unless you eat the flesh of the Human One and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. My flesh is true food and My blood is true drink. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in me and I in them. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me lives because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven. It isn't like the bread your ancestors ate, and then they died. Whoever eats this bread will live forever." Jesus said these things while He was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. Many of His disciples who heard this said, "This message is harsh. Who can hear it?" Jesus knew that the disciples were grumbling about this and He said to them, "Does this offend you? What if you were to see the Human One going up where He was before? The Spirit is the one who gives life and the flesh doesn't help at all. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life. Yet some of you don't believe." Jesus knew from the beginning who wouldn't believe and the one who would betray Him. He said, "For this reason I said to you that none can come to me unless the Father enables them to do so." At this, many of His disciples turned away and no longer accompanied Him. Jesus asked the Twelve, "Do you also want to leave?" Simon Peter answered, "Lord, where would we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that You are God's Holy One."

Prayer Requests

Mitch Mitchell
Bill Reichter
Art Schnatterly
Marty Schnatterly
Nini Schneider

The Glickert families on the passing of Sheree Glickert

Share prayer requests online at livingwordumc.org