

14 FEBRUARY-31 MARCH



Wesley
METHODIST CHURCH



LENT 2024 DEVOTIONAL



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LENT DEVOTIONAL 2024 | PASTOR'S MESSAGE

REV RAYMOND FONG

Dear Wesley Family

My prayer is that the Holy Spirit will transform us this Lent. Starting with Ash Wednesday, Lent is a 40-day season (not counting Sundays) marked by an intentional focus and reflection on the life, ministry and sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, culminating in His death on Good Friday and resurrection on Easter Sunday.

The 40-day period represents the time when Jesus went into the wilderness to fast and pray (Matt 4:1-11). During these 40 days, Jesus overcame temptation in preparation for the kingdom work He was to do before eventually going to the cross.

During Lent, we may practise the following spiritual disciplines:

a. Confession and Examination

The 40 days are set aside to confess our sins and examine the areas of recurring sin in our lives (Ps 139:23-24) as we seek God's grace in earnest repentance.

b. Fasting and Prayer

We may either fast from food or "fast" by giving up something that occupies our time and attention, e.g. phone games or engaging in social media, so we can use that time instead to pray. This is to cultivate the practice of holy abstinence and self-control from worldly pursuits.

c. Giving and Service

We can serve others through generous giving and volunteering. We can donate the money we would normally use to buy the things we are fasting from. These make us aware of the suffering and needs of others and also compel us to deeper sacrifice as we meet the needs of others.

As we engage in these spiritual disciplines this Lent, may we be transformed into the likeness of Christ and grow in our appreciation of the sacrificial love of Christ.

During Lent, we will have a sermon series based on the book of Mark. This special Lent Devotional has daily reflections on Scripture readings from the book of Mark as we examine the work that Jesus did while He was here on earth. These daily reflections are personal, heartfelt and authentic. I pray you will be deeply encouraged as you take time to reflect and respond to God's word to you.

May we encounter our Lord Jesus anew this Lent. May His transforming love cause us to grow in our discipleship as we engage His Word in reflection and respond in obedience.

May we develop a more disciplined and intimate prayer life as we take time to draw near to God, listen to His voice and respond to love our Lord and others.

On a journey this Lent with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Raymond". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "R".

Rev Raymond Fong
Pastor-In-Charge



LENT 2024

14 FEBRUARY TO 31 MARCH 2024

1. Lent is a season of 40 days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday (14 February 2024) and ends on Holy Saturday (30 March 2024). It is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter (31 March 2024).
2. Lent is also a time of self-examination and reflection. For this Season of Lent, our Bible Reading Drive will take us on a journey through the Gospel of Mark. The usual BRD reflections based on the R.O.A.D format will take a break during Lent.
3. Instead, for the second year running, the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) has put together this special Lent Devotional Booklet. In it are 38 heartfelt devotions written by its members or church leaders, each applying the day's Scripture reading to their personal lives.
4. Join us this Lent for a time of reflection. You may follow the guidelines for Lent Daily Devotions on Page 6. Together as a church family, let us read and reflect on the daily Scriptures and, more importantly, respond to God's Word.
5. There will be no daily devotions on the six Sundays between Ash Wednesday and Holy Saturday, as well as Maundy Thursday (Day 38), Good Friday (Day 39) and Easter Sunday.
6. On these nine days, our pastors will preach on various passages from Mark during the worship services. Listen to the sermons as you go to church to worship God, and reflect on what the Lord may be saying to you.

Lent Sermon Series / Gospel of Mark

SERMON 1: Sunday, 25 February 2024

Scripture passage: Mark 4:35-41

SERMON 2: Sunday, 3 March 2024

Scripture passage: Mark 7:24-30

SERMON 3: Sunday, 10 March 2024

Scripture passage: Mark 9:14-29

SERMON 4: Sunday, 17 March 2024

Scripture passage: Mark 10:35-45

SERMON 5: Sunday, 24 March 2024 (Palm Sunday)

Scripture passage: Mark 11:1-25

SERMON 6: 28 Mar 2024 (Maundy Thursday)

Scripture passage: Mark 14:12-26

SERMON 7: 29 Mar 2024 (Good Friday)

Scripture passage: Mark 15:1-41

SERMON 8: 31 Mar 2024 (Easter Sunday)

Scripture passage: Mark 16:1-20

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THE GOSPEL OF MARK GUIDELINES FOR LENT DAILY DEVOTIONS |

PAUSE: Pause for 2 to 3 minutes of uninterrupted silence to prepare yourself to meet with God. To help you anchor on God with your undivided attention, you may use a name of God, such as Jesus, Emmanuel (God with us), El Shaddai (God Almighty) or Jehovah Jireh (The Lord will Provide), as your prayer word. Say the prayer word slowly to help you return to God each time you find your mind wandering away. This helps to focus and settle your thoughts before you begin your devotion.

PRAY: Once you are ready to start the day's devotion, say a prayer asking God to speak to you through the Scripture passage and the Devotion, and to open your heart to be receptive to His Word.

READ: Read the day's Scripture slowly. If necessary, read it a second time. What word or verse caught your attention? What is God trying to say to you? How may you apply what the Scripture says to your personal life?

REFLECT: Then read the daily devotion written by a church leader. Each day, members of the Local Church Executive Committee (LCEC) will take turns to share how they have applied the particular passage in their personal lives. Reflect on what God may be saying to you through their sharing. Write your reflections, both from reading the Scripture on your own and from the daily devotion, in the empty pages provided.

RESPOND: Respond to the Discussion Pointers, on your own or in your small group. What is the one takeaway for your personal life, or one thing you would commit to do to reflect the Light of Jesus in your workplace?

REST: End your daily devotion, whether individually or in a group, with a prayer, thanking God for guiding and speaking to you, and for wisdom and strength to respond in obedience.

[MARK 1:1-20]

John The Baptist Prepares The Way

¹The beginning of the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God, ²as it is written in Isaiah the prophet: “I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way”—³“a voice of one calling in the wilderness, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.’”

⁴And so John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. ⁵The whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem went out to him. Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River. ⁶John wore clothing made of camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. ⁷And this was his message: “After me comes the one more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. ⁸I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

The Baptism And Testing Of Jesus

⁹At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. ¹⁰Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. ¹¹And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.”

¹²At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, ¹³and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him.

Jesus Announces The Good News

¹⁴After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ¹⁵“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Jesus Calls His First Disciples

¹⁶As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” ¹⁸At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Forerunners Of Christ's Second Coming

By Aw Choon Hui, Lay Leader

Mark 1:2-3 (NIV)

²"I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way" —³"a voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

I would find it difficult living like John the Baptist. His clothes of coarse camel's hair seem itchy and his diet of locusts, while seemingly high in protein, would be hard for me to swallow. And battling wild bees to get access to wild honey is not my idea of seeking good nutrition.

I also never fully understood why God chose the wilderness to make an important announcement after 400 years of silence. Why not the busiest town square or temple in Jerusalem? Who is there to listen in the wilderness? And yet God amazed everyone when droves of people were drawn into the wilderness, away from all the distractions, just to hear a strange man herald the coming Messiah (verse 3).

In a sense, all of us are heralds or forerunners of Christ's second coming. We have been sent amongst family, friends, colleagues, and others to testify of the love of Jesus who died for us and was raised, and who will be coming back soon.

I find it important to step periodically into the "wilderness" to be away from what entangles me, to be attuned to God's voice and be realigned to His purpose for my life. Going for a Strangely Warmed Retreat, mission trip, or just going to the beach to read the Bible and be still, have been spiritually rewarding and restful for me. I acknowledge that such times are difficult to carve out from my many obligations which seem more urgent. But if I do not do it, then I tend to lose focus and become less dependent on God. Such times are needed to prevent other things from taking a hold on me, just so that I can be reminded to depend on Christ alone.

John embraced his humble position as only "a voice". He spent nearly 30 years of life in the wilderness preparing for his ministry which lasted about 6 months before he baptised Jesus and then saw most of his followers leave to follow Jesus. From John, I learn humility, for he never complained or rebelled against his short, supporting role. John was completely yielded to the Holy Spirit and that earned him high praise from Jesus Himself (Matt 11:11).

This Ash Wednesday, as the ashes are etched on our foreheads, may we be reminded of our message to the world, "Repent, and believe the good news!" (verse 15).

Some practical steps I can take:

1. Ask God to help me be an effective forerunner for Christ's second coming.
2. Set aside time to be "in the wilderness" where I can re-focus on God and be realigned for His purpose. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Why do you think God chose such a humble and least expected way to announce the coming of Christ?
2. How can you best fulfil your role as a forerunner of Christ's second coming in your workplace, home or in school?
3. Are you willing to play a quiet, supporting role to others and not always seek the places of honour?

[MARK 1:21-34]

Jesus Drives Out An Impure Spirit

²¹They went to Capernaum, and when the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach. ²²The people were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law. ²³Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, ²⁴“What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are — the Holy One of God!”

²⁵“Be quiet!” said Jesus sternly. “Come out of him!” ²⁶The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek.

²⁷The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him.” ²⁸News about him spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee.

Jesus Heals Many

²⁹As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. ³⁰Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. ³¹So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

³²That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. ³³The whole town gathered at the door, ³⁴and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

Whispers That Cause Ripples

By Yeo Su Chen, Chairperson, Communications

In this passage, Jesus demonstrates His authority as the Lord of the universe. He could cast out evil spirits, and the evil spirits themselves knew who Jesus was.

We typically associate authority with leadership and, in this case, kingship. Real authority inspires and encourages people, just like those who were amazed and astonished by Christ’s teaching at the synagogue. The scribes taught people who went to the synagogue in those days, akin to teachers with PhDs today. Yet, the Bible says Jesus “taught them as one who had authority”.

What struck me most in this passage is not merely the authority of Christ. What blew me away was how Christ – the ultimate authority in the world – treated Simon’s mother-in-law when He went to their home. In verse 31, Mark took care to describe these small actions of our Lord. In a few words, Jesus embodied the image of a loving Heavenly Father who cares genuinely and personally for His child. He had all the authority under Him; He had a very busy ministry. But Jesus made time and cared for individuals. They were not just a headcount to Him.

When I stopped going to Church momentarily during my college years, what eventually brought me home was the care I felt from my leaders, including my pastor from the church. By the time I was in my final year of college, I was in a church where my pastor was a sought-after preacher and well-known to many. By the grace of God, he had made a name for himself as a gifted preacher, illustrious lecturer, and notable author. An authoritative figure in the local Christian community, he would also be the first to pour tea for whoever sat near him and offer them food before he started eating. He always had a kind word for all of us, no matter how old or who we were, and it did not bother him where we came from and where we were going.

Yet, when he sensed or heard we were not walking right with the Lord, he would also not hesitate to sit us down to point us back to God and the correct values, always intentionally, lovingly and graciously. Eventually, my pastor was one of those who showed me the way back to the fold. I was just an ordinary overseas student trying to come up with excuses to skip church; I was not a permanent church member. Yet, the busy pastor made time and effort to care for me.

US President Theodore Roosevelt once said: Nobody cares about how much you know until they know how much you care.

Jesus is the Saviour of this world. Yet, He cared enough to help an ordinary sick woman sit up on a bed. A seemingly random small action can reveal a lot about a person.

Jesus is all-knowing and all-authoritative. But most of all, He is also all-embracing, authentic and altruistic in His ministry to the world. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What do you generally associate with an authoritative figure? Why do you think the people in this passage were so amazed by what Jesus taught?
2. What aspects of Christ do you see in this passage that are new to you?
3. How can a perspective on God’s authority over everything in our lives help you deal with the more unjust and difficult situations in life?

[MARK 1:35-45]

Jesus Prays In A Solitary Place

³⁵Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. ³⁶Simon and his companions went to look for him, ³⁷and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”

³⁸Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” ³⁹So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Jesus Heals A Man With Leprosy

⁴⁰A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”

⁴¹Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be clean!” ⁴²Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

⁴³Jesus sent him away at once with a strong warning: ⁴⁴“See that you don’t tell this to anyone. But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.”

⁴⁵Instead he went out and began to talk freely, spreading the news. As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere.

Prayer, Service And Compassion

By Angelyn Peh, Associate Lay Leader

I thank God for reminding me about three learning points today:

1. Prayer

During the years of Jesus' work on earth, He demonstrated His prayer life on various occasions. Verse 35 is one example. We are told that “very early in the morning while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed”. This strongly reminds me of the importance of prioritising time with God, talking to Him and listening to Him. That Jesus made

the effort of going out to a solitary place also demonstrates the significance of seeking God and connecting with Him intimately.

Although I've been a Christian for more than 40 years, I confess that my prayer life only came alive in the past 20 years and since then, I've experienced a closer walk with God. I can testify that putting God first, talking to Him before I start the day, and seeking Him to provide strength, guidance and wisdom for the challenges I may face during the day truly help me prepare mentally, emotionally and spiritually for the tasks I need to accomplish.

2. Service

Verses 36 and 37 tell us that when Jesus' disciples found Him and told Him that everyone was looking for Him, He replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."

Jesus emphasised His mission to preach the Good News of the Kingdom of God. I can see His willingness to serve people, even in the midst of His rest and quiet time with God. This reminds me that I truly need to learn to be flexible and adaptable, in order not to miss any new opportunities the Lord has planned for me to fulfil His purpose in my life.

3. Compassion

Due to the fear of contagion at that time, no one dared to touch someone with leprosy, but Jesus did so with compassion and healed the leper. This deep and unconditional love Jesus had for the sick, the poor, the least and the last stirred my heart. There is so much more that I can do for those in need as long as I am willing to do so.

Yes, Lord, I am willing!

"I can do all this through him who gives me strength." (Philippians 4:13) ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What do verses 35 to 39 tell you about Jesus' priorities? What is the next step you may take to place your priorities more in sync with Jesus?
2. Do you take time to pray in solitude amidst your busy schedule in ministry or at work?
3. Jesus showed His willingness to serve the people in need. How about you? Are you willing to serve the last, the least and the lost?

[MARK 2:1-17]

Jesus Forgives And Heals A Paralyzed Man

¹A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, ¹¹“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”

Jesus Calls Levi And Eats With Sinners

¹³Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

¹⁵While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: “Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

¹⁷On hearing this, Jesus said to them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

How Is My Faith In God?

By *Alvin Chia, Associate Lay Leader*

I have been talking to a few friends about religious faith and the discourse is often centred on personal experience. I am hence drawn to the details of the account of the four friends who went to great lengths, because of their faith, to bring their paralysed friend to the Lord when He was preaching to a sardine-packed crowd in a home in Capernaum.

We were told the crowd gathered in such large numbers to hear Jesus that there was no room left, not even outside the door (verse 2). So what the four friends did was to carry the man and climb up the roof of the house, make an opening through the roof above Jesus by digging through it, and then lower the mat that the man was lying on to bring and present him to Jesus (verse 4). What an amazing account of the faith of the men and how they acted on their faith.

Their act of faith was rewarded with not just physical but spiritual healing. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralysed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven" (verse 5). And in verse 12, the man got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

As I reflected on the account of the incident, the key takeaway for me is how the paralysed man and his four friends acted out their faith. They must have heard of Jesus and His miraculous acts as news of His ministry spread. Hearing and having head knowledge is a good starting point. However, they did not simply just hear and not do anything. The key to acquiring and strengthening the faith is to live it out. They went on to develop confidence and experience it personally.

In this season of Lent, I am committed to exercise my faith daily. Similar to physical exercise which builds up muscles in my body, I will exercise my spiritual faith to build up my spiritual relationship with the Lord. In this way, I pray that I will be able to grow in my journey to better trust and obey Him.

Dear Lord, thank You for Your Word and the reminder to live out my faith and trust in You in all areas of my life. May You help me to exercise my faith daily and to deepen my relationship with You. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What is faith? In whom do you believe; what do you believe; and why do you believe?
2. Are you always struggling and lacking in faith? Why?
3. What does God say about faith? And trusting and believing in Him? How are you acting out your faith?

[MARK 2:18-28]

Jesus Questioned About Fasting

¹⁸Now John's disciples and the Pharisees were fasting. Some people came and asked Jesus, "How is it that John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees are fasting, but yours are not?"

¹⁹Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? They cannot, so long as they have him with them. ²⁰But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them, and on that day they will fast.

²¹"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. Otherwise, the new piece will pull away from the old, making the tear worse. ²²And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the wine will burst the skins, and both the wine and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins."

Jesus Is Lord Of The Sabbath

²³One Sabbath Jesus was going through the grainfields, and as his disciples walked along, they began to pick some heads of grain. ²⁴The Pharisees said to him, "Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?"

²⁵He answered, "Have you never read what David did when he and his companions were hungry and in need? ²⁶In the days of Abiathar the high priest, he entered the house of God and ate the consecrated bread, which is lawful only for priests to eat. And he also gave some to his companions."

²⁷Then he said to them, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.

²⁸So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

More Than Just A Set of Rules

By Koh Geok Cheng, Chairperson, Wesley Glowing Years Ministry

Jesus used the illustration of unshrunk cloth and new wine bursting old wineskins to describe the Pharisees whose hearts and old ways were not changed to receive Jesus and be transformed by Him. He used the controversy about what could or could not be done on the Sabbath to explain that showing grace and love to people is more important than following a set of rules.

As I meditated on this passage, I recall the period when I was serving in a para-church organisation as an administrator. There were many rules and procedures to ensure that things worked smoothly, efficiently and effectively. I made every effort to know the procedures well, and even prided myself on being able to enforce them on every person without exception. As I thought more about it, I realised that I had become strict and inflexible. Even my husband asked if I was treating the rules as the Bible rather than applying biblical truths.

It was then that I started focusing on what Jesus would do and realised that discipleship is not about following a set of rules and doing a list of things. It's about transformation that starts with a change of heart from the inside which will flow into actions that reflect Jesus' character.

To be a true disciple of Jesus, I need to read His Word regularly, not just know it in my head but to let His Word transform my heart. Whether at home as a homemaker, or in church as a servant of God, or in the community as a witness for Christ, I need to learn to see others through God's eyes with a heart of love and compassion. I have to act in ways that will reflect God's love and grace more. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Jesus used illustrations to explain that showing love and grace to people is more important than following a set of rules. Why do you think Jesus did that?
2. When was the last time you searched your heart? In what ways does your heart need to be transformed by God?
3. In the marketplace, community, church or home where God has placed you, what is your main purpose, and how will you show more love and grace to others?

Jesus Heals On The Sabbath

¹Another time Jesus went into the synagogue, and a man with a shriveled hand was there. ²Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath. ³Jesus said to the man with the shriveled hand, “Stand up in front of everyone.”

⁴Then Jesus asked them, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” But they remained silent.

⁵He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored. ⁶Then the Pharisees went out and began to plot with the Herodians how they might kill Jesus.

Crowds Follow Jesus

⁷Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lake, and a large crowd from Galilee followed. ⁸When they heard about all he was doing, many people came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, and the regions across the Jordan and around Tyre and Sidon. ⁹Because of the crowd he told his disciples to have a small boat ready for him, to keep the people from crowding him. ¹⁰For he had healed many, so that those with diseases were pushing forward to touch him. ¹¹Whenever the impure spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, “You are the Son of God.” ¹²But he gave them strict orders not to tell others about him.

Jesus Appoints The Twelve

¹³Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. ¹⁴He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach ¹⁵and to have authority to drive out demons. ¹⁶These are the twelve he appointed: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter), ¹⁷James son of Zebedee and his brother John (to them he gave the name Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder”), ¹⁸Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot ¹⁹and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

Act In Faith, Rest In Faith

By *Foo Yu Da, Chairperson, Witness & Evangelism*

"Some of them were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath...He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts, said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' He stretched it out, and his hand was completely restored" (verses 2 and 5).

In the marketplace, do I dare do what is right in God's eyes despite clear opposition? An example could be a situation where I am forced to consider compromising the fairness to a customer in exchange for a more profitable transaction. Should I refuse to do the right thing that puts myself at risk of missing business targets and losing the favour of the organisation, or should I simply "close one eye" and go with the flow? The latter is often the easier option.

But what encourages me from this passage is not just that Jesus did what was right, but He also did it knowing it would put Himself at risk of persecution. Some decisions can be emotionally difficult to make, but Jesus has set me an example to follow in His footsteps. How else can I be salt and light, be the change that God wants me to be in the world, and bring my colleagues and friends one step closer to Jesus?

The passage also serves as an important reminder to me that in the midst of the hustle and bustle in our careers, family, and ministry, it is important to "withdraw" in order to rest and connect with God. "Jesus withdrew with His disciples to the lake...[and] because of the crowd He told his disciples to have a small boat ready for Him, to keep the people from crowding Him" (verses 7 and 9). I have to constantly remind myself never to compromise rest. I have learnt that the urge to constantly agree to every request and the guilt that comes with saying "no" has great negative consequences to my spirit. The fatigue and being on the verge of burnout is a serious reminder to take rest and sabbath seriously.

And so I end my devotion with two key personal takeaways: (1) trust in God and act in faith according to His character so that I can be salt and light, bringing people closer to God, and (2) trust in God and rest in faith. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What do you see as your purpose in the workplace?
2. Based on this purpose, what are areas you want to be more aware of and/or want to change?
3. What do you need to do to keep the discipline of rest?

[MARK 3:20-35]

Jesus Accused By His Family And By Teachers Of The Law

²⁰Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. ²¹When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, “He is out of his mind.”

²²And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, “He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons.”

²³So Jesus called them over to him and began to speak to them in parables: “How can Satan drive out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. ²⁶And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. ²⁷In fact, no one can enter a strong man’s house without first tying him up. Then he can plunder the strong man’s house. ²⁸Truly I tell you, people can be forgiven all their sins and every slander they utter, ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; they are guilty of an eternal sin.”

³⁰He said this because they were saying, “He has an impure spirit.”

³¹Then Jesus’ mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. ³²A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, “Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.”

³³“Who are my mother and my brothers?” he asked.

³⁴Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! ³⁵Whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.”

Whoever Does God's Will

By Adam Leong, Chairperson, Family Life Ministry

As I reflect on my journey during this Lent season, I ask myself if I have been true to the person I professed to follow and worship, Jesus Christ.

Being a Christian is not just about reading the Bible, praying, tithing, serving in church...etc. No doubt, these disciplines are important in leading me to a closer walk with God. However, after reading the above passage, what struck me was verse 35, "Whoever does God's will..."

Don't get me wrong, all the spiritual disciplines I mentioned earlier are surely what God wants us to do but is there something more to the Christian life beyond these? What does it mean to be a Christian in my workplace, or during leisure activities with friends who are not believers?

My point is, have I segregated or compartmentalised God in areas of my life where my will is done instead of His? Sadly, there have been more times than I can remember when this has happened. It is a struggle to forgive people who have hurt me, and love those who would rather have nothing to do with me.

It is in these challenging moments that God will gently ask if I have denied myself and carried my cross before I followed Him. The sequence is important because if I just follow Him without denying myself, I will have no cross to bear and I end up "doing Christianity" the way I like.

During this Lent season, Jesus reminds me of His obedience to our Father, by not only living a sinless life but also by paying the ultimate price with His life at Calvary for my sins. He has also sent His Holy Spirit to empower me to live a life that can glorify Him.

My prayer is that as I continue my faith journey of becoming more Christ-like (day by day, moment by moment), I will not focus on how much I know about God (head knowledge), but how much He is being reflected in my life (heart transformation), through my thoughts, words and deeds.

Will others see me as a brother of Christ?

I hope this will be your prayer as well. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What does Christlikeness mean to you?
2. What is the one main challenge in your spiritual journey towards Christlikeness?
3. What would it take for you to overcome this challenge?

The Parable Of The Sower

¹Again Jesus began to teach by the lake. The crowd that gathered around him was so large that he got into a boat and sat in it out on the lake, while all the people were along the shore at the water's edge. ²He taught them many things by parables, and in his teaching said: ³“Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. ⁴As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and the birds came and ate it up. ⁵Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. ⁶But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root. ⁷Other seed fell among thorns, which grew up and choked the plants, so that they did not bear grain. ⁸Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times.”

⁹Then Jesus said, “Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.”

¹⁰When he was alone, the Twelve and the others around him asked him about the parables. ¹¹He told them, “The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables ¹²so that, “they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!””

¹³Then Jesus said to them, “Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable? ¹⁴The farmer sows the word. ¹⁵Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them. ¹⁶Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. ¹⁷But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. ¹⁸Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; ¹⁹but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful. ²⁰Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown.”

The Condition Of My Heart

By Chan Wai Lup, Chairperson, Discipleship & Nurture

When I first read the parable of the sower many years ago, I understood it to mean that a person can respond differently to the Word of God depending on the condition of his heart, which can be represented by one of the four different types of soil in the

parable. One's heart can be hardened, or shallow, or crowded or willing to accept and live by the Word of God. Of course, I had wanted my heart to be the 4th type, one that is fully ready to live by God's Word. But I have come to realise in my years of being a Christian, that my heart goes through all four different conditions in response to God's Word.

There were times when I chose to harden my heart by rejecting God's instructions in specific circumstances. When I first became a Christian, I was also dating a non-Christian. It took me almost six months to obey God's instruction not to be unequally yoked. When my heart was hardened, I could not receive God's Word as truth to be obeyed.

As a young Christian entering National Service, I discovered that most of my platoon mates were non-Christians. I was often laughed at when I read the Bible at night under a torchlight. I thank God for the courage not to be deterred by this. As I allowed God's Word to take root in my heart, I also began to develop deep convictions in many biblical truths. This did not happen overnight, but it took many years for my heart to grow from being shallow to being deep in faith.

I started work at a time when many were after the 4Cs (cash, credit card, car and condo). The lure of a better life led me to invest in what I could not afford. When recession occurred in the 90s, I was hit hard and worried about how to make ends meet. My heart was crowded by the pleasures and cares of this world. Only when my heart was broken and contrite could God till it to make it fertile, so that I am willing to trust and obey His Word.

Heavenly Father, I confess that my heart is inclined to stray from You. I need constant examen and searching by Your Holy Spirit. Thank You for Your mercy and grace in dealing with my heart. Help me to always keep it receptive to Your Word and put in me a desire to obey You in every aspect of my life. With Your help, may I bear fruit for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen! ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Have you experienced difficulty in accepting God's Word as truth? Do you sometimes find it hard to obey? How can you ensure that your heart is more receptive and rooted in God's Word?
2. How can you keep your heart from being crowded out by the lures and worries of life? What are the areas you need to surrender to God?
3. What does it mean for you to bear fruit for God in your life?

[MARK 4:21-25]

A Lamp On A Stand

²¹He said to them, “Do you bring in a lamp to put it under a bowl or a bed? Instead, don’t you put it on its stand? ²²For whatever is hidden is meant to be disclosed, and whatever is concealed is meant to be brought out into the open. ²³If anyone has ears to hear, let them hear.”

²⁴“Consider carefully what you hear,” he continued. “With the measure you use, it will be measured to you—and even more. ²⁵Whoever has will be given more; whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them.”

Let It Shine

By *Paul Gwee, Associate Lay Leader*

These verses serve as a timely reminder that the Light of Jesus which is in my heart must shine without interferences, such as being “under the shade or bed”. I should also bring it to wherever I am placed.

As I reflect further, what are some interferences in my life? Lately, there have been more requests for me to commit my time to the marketplace. In my busyness, there is a tendency for me to rush through my daily walk with Jesus who is the only source of the Light. I know that without a real connection, I cannot shine for Him and have a personal and close relationship with Him. Thus I must intentionally discipline myself to prioritise my commitments and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit to decline commitments that may seem important but are actually not important. My relationship with Jesus is more critical.

Next, I must also actively bring the Light of Jesus to where I am assigned by Him. Yet, He warns me that I could unwittingly not be putting the Light on a stand. In other words, I need to be conspicuous so that others in the community can see the Light of Jesus and come to know Him. I must not be afraid to stand out in the crowd and be identified as a believer of Jesus Christ even though there could be unwelcomed stares. Notwithstanding my human imperfections, I must just take the plunge and be led by the Holy Spirit.

As a case in point, I was recently overjoyed to know that a former colleague had come to know Jesus through personal testimonies about what Jesus has done in my life and others' lives as well. This is just like the Samaritan woman at the well who, upon meeting Jesus, went to her hometown and told her neighbours to "come and see" Jesus. There are still many of my colleagues and friends who have yet to know Jesus. The reminder to put my lamp on the stand encourages me to persevere. It is the Holy Spirit that works in the lives of others; I just need to be the light that shines for Jesus.

Just like the song "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine", others will be drawn out of darkness and into the transformative Light of Christ if we let our light shine. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Can your colleagues tell that you are a Christian from the way you conduct yourself in the workplace? If not, why not?
2. Are you the light that points your colleagues to God? If not, ask yourself, "What bowls have hidden my light?"
3. Is there someone in your workplace that needs to hear about Jesus? Pray for an opportunity to share the good news with him or her.

[MARK 4:26-34]

The Parable Of The Growing Seed

²⁶He also said, “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. ²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. ²⁸All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. ²⁹As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come.”

The Parable Of The Mustard Seed

³⁰Again he said, “What shall we say the kingdom of God is like, or what parable shall we use to describe it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which is the smallest of all seeds on earth. ³²Yet when planted, it grows and becomes the largest of all garden plants, with such big branches that the birds can perch in its shade.”

³³With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand. ³⁴He did not say anything to them without using a parable. But when he was alone with his own disciples, he explained everything.

Be A Joyful Co-worker In Christ

By Josephine Loo, Chairperson, Property Management

To me, the kingdom of God is the sphere where God is in control as the Emmanuel and everything in it is designed according to His plan. These two parables illustrate to us God’s intended purpose for us on Earth, which is to fulfil God’s will.

The parable of the growing seed describes the farmer’s intention to multiply the crop. Once the sowing is done, the seed undergoes the transformation according to the way God planned it. And when the time is up, it is ready for harvest. Similarly, for the mustard seed, its destiny is to grow into a large tree which can provide shade for birds that perch on it.

In my work, I need to recognise my place in God's greater scheme of things. As I carry out my job and tasks, I am only setting in motion the will that God has for me, which is to use my expertise and skills to do the work. Behind that, God has a plan for the work. How the work progresses with my participation as well as contributions from various colleagues or consultants, is according to God's will. At times, I need to learn to adjust and modify the way I carry out my task because it benefits the project.

Many times at work, things may move differently from the way I imagined or planned. But I need to remind myself that God has already got a plan for it and I am only given a chance to participate. It can also happen even without my involvement. I only need to play my part and leave God to move the rest.

As I carry on my work in my capacity, the other aspect I am reminded of is to carry out my work in a joyful way. As my actions can reflect my posture in Christ, the manner in which I carry out my dealings will affect how others view Christians. So let us be joyful co-workers in Christ, to fulfil our destiny and God's will. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What motivates you to do the "everyday" tasks well?
2. Do you want to be a cheerful co-worker in Christ?
3. Recognising your part in God's plan, what can you do to reflect that in your work?

Note:

Mark 4:35-41 will be the Scripture passage for the sermons on Sunday, 25 February 2024.

Jesus Restores A Demon-Possessed Man

¹They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ²When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. ⁵Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

⁶When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him.

⁷He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” ⁸For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

⁹Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” ¹⁰And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

¹¹A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. ¹²The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” ¹³He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

¹⁴Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. ¹⁵When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. ¹⁶Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. ¹⁷Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

¹⁸As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. ¹⁹Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.”

²⁰So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.

Tell Them How Much The Lord Has Done For You

By **Gordon Tan**, Associate Lay Leader

Mark 5:18-20 (ESV) - As he [Jesus] was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed with demons begged him that he might be with him. And he did not permit him but said to him, "Go home to your friends and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." And he went away and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and everyone marveled.

At the end of Mark 4, Jesus instructs His disciples to cross the Sea of Galilee to its eastern shores in the region of the Gadarenes. During the time of Christ, this region was inhabited mostly by Gentiles, not Jews, and the area had a strong Greek influence. This accounts for the presence of the large herd of swine (Matthew 8:30-33; Mark 5:1-17).

The demon possessed man was described as someone ostracised by society (lived among the tombs), incredibly strong (no one could bind him anymore, he wrenched the chains apart, and he broke the shackles in pieces, no one had the strength to subdue him) and tormented (crying out and cutting himself with stones day and night). When he encountered Jesus, the demons that possessed him immediately recognised who Jesus was. This suggested that he was not his natural self.

After the demons had left this man, his personality changed completely. He was described as "sitting there, clothed and in his right mind" (verse 15). I imagine that this man was very grateful for being delivered from his bondage. In fact, he displayed this gratitude by begging to be with Jesus and to follow Him. But when Jesus told him to go home and tell his friends "how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you", he obeyed.

During this Lenten season, I am reminded of what the Lord has done for me and how, through the work of the Cross, God had mercy on me. I recalled how the punishment that I should bear was borne instead by Jesus. Sadness often fills

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my heart thinking about the physical pain He suffered. More than that, tears well up when I think about the feelings of shame He endured, the rejection He experienced from the community He lived with, and the estrangement He suffered when God forsook Him. All to deliver me from the bondage of sin. All to buy the forgiveness of my sins. All to set me free to live an abundant guilt free life.

Yet this passage surprised me as I meditated on it. God's deepest desire is for everyone to hear the gospel. The one thing I should do in obedience is to go to my family, my friends, my colleagues, and tell them what the Lord has done for me. I should share with them how I experience God's mercies and miracles daily. I should share with them how God has changed me and how He is restoring me to be the person He intended me to be.

I will take time each day to recall the blessings of the day. I will remember the people who touched and loved me. I will give thanks for the little blessings I encounter and not take them for granted. I will praise God for the opportunities to do something worthwhile and meaningful during my day. I will also remember to thank Him for the strength He gives me as I overcome trials and temptations.

I want to show appreciation to the people around me. People who thoughtfully take care of my needs. People who are considerate towards me. People who encourage me. People who affirm me. I want to remember to thank them. I want to reciprocate their kindness. I want to share with them what God is doing in my life. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. List down the blessings you have received from God in this past one year. Say a prayer of thanksgiving for what God has given you.
2. Go and share with others in your family or your workplace "how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you".
3. As you have been blessed, is there anyone in the family or the workplace whom the Lord has impressed on you to bless in this Season of Lent? Go and be a blessing to them!

[**MARK 5:21-43**]

Jesus Raises A Dead Girl And Heals A Sick Woman

²¹When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. ²²Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. ²³He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.” ²⁴So Jesus went with him.

A large crowd followed and pressed around him. ²⁵And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸because she thought, “If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed.” ²⁹Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, “Who touched my clothes?”

³¹“You see the people crowding against you,” his disciples answered, “and yet you can ask, ‘Who touched me?’”

³²But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering.”

³⁵While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?”

³⁶Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.”

³⁷He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. ³⁸When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. ³⁹He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” ⁴⁰But they laughed at him.

After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. ⁴¹He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). ⁴²Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. ⁴³He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.

Don't Be Afraid, Just Believe

By Sylvia Yeo, Associate Lay Leader

It was only upon studying this passage more closely that my eyes were opened to the lesson we can glean when we compare the two overlapping stories or miracles. Jairus was a synagogue leader, much like a church leader of today, known to many in the community and his daughter was very precious and loved. In comparison, the other woman with a blood disorder was unclean and unknown. The similarities are intriguing. Both are about the healing of two women – a 12-year-old young girl and an older woman who had been ill for 12 years. Both stories revolve around 'touch'. Jairus asked for Jesus to put His hands on his daughter so that she would live. The woman only wanted to touch Jesus' cloak to be healed. Jairus had money while in contrast, the woman had little as she had "spent all she had" (verse 26). We also see the faith of the father and the faith of the woman. Everyone knew the girl was healed when she walked around. In the other story, no one, except Jesus and the woman, knew that she had been healed of her blood disorder.

Both Jairus and the woman were desperate in pursuing Jesus, and they had the faith that He could do something for them. Jesus' healing was a miracle of blessing.

Jesus saw the faith in the woman and did much more than heal her. As an unclean woman, she was not supposed to be in public, let alone be near a rabbi. Jesus did more than heal her as He made it public that her faith had 'healed her'. She no longer needed to shun people because of her illness. If Jesus did not do that, she would continue being an outcast, and always feel she had 'stolen' a blessing. In Jesus acknowledging her, all would know that the 'Rabbi' had accepted her, and they should as well.

When Jairus' daughter died and hopes of Jesus saving the girl had been dashed, Jesus' words, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (verse 36) are a powerful reminder that faith in Jesus Christ is all that is needed.

Sin is the root of every sadness, brokenness, and suffering. I recognise the truth that a world which denies God is also one that is hopeless. If Jesus willingly desires to restore everything that my perfect and good Father in heaven had intended for me, why am I still seeking solutions outside of Him, thinking that I know better? Lord, during this season of Lent, help my unbelief. I trust in You to restore everything in Your perfect time and lead me in ways everlasting. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Both women desire the touch of Jesus to be healed. What is the touch from Jesus that you need today? Commit it to Jesus.
2. What is the faith that you see in the two overlapping stories in this passage?
3. What is preventing you from turning your fears into faith? Why is it so difficult to "just believe"?

A Prophet Without Honor

¹Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. ²When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed.

“Where did this man get these things?” they asked. “What’s this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing? ³Isn’t this the carpenter? Isn’t this Mary’s son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren’t his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

⁴Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home.” ⁵He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. ⁶He was amazed at their lack of faith.

Jesus Sends Out The Twelve

Then Jesus went around teaching from village to village. ⁷Calling the Twelve to him, he began to send them out two by two and gave them authority over impure spirits.

⁸These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts. ⁹Wear sandals but not an extra shirt. ¹⁰Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town. ¹¹And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, leave that place and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

¹²They went out and preached that people should repent. ¹³They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

John The Baptist Beheaded

¹⁴King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.”

¹⁵Others said, “He is Elijah.”

And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.”

¹⁶But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!”

¹⁷For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. ¹⁸For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, ²⁰because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him.

²¹Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. ²²When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests.

The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." ²³And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom."

²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?"
"The head of John the Baptist," she answered.

²⁵At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter."

²⁶The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, ²⁸and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. ²⁹On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

In His Ministry

By Mabel Tay, Chairperson, Missions

Embarking on their debut expedition without food, money and clothing, the disciples would keenly feel the lack of basic items required for physical survival. This intentional deprivation would propel them into active participation in the world—unable to retreat to comfort, the disciples would be motivated to earn their keep and seek the cooperation and hospitality of others.

Without the option of shifting around even if something about the house or host wasn't to their liking or constructive for the purpose of their journey, I see the

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disciples exercising enhanced conscientiousness in selecting their hosts, as well as commitment and endurance.

Thus compelled to make new friends and build effective relationships, the disciples would be continually presented with the need to interact with their hosts and other town residents, and therein an abundance of opportunities to proclaim God's love to them in word and deed.

The passage reminds me that it is God's design for His people to be engaged participants and contributors in the marketplace to fulfil His ministry. In our society, commitment falters, and loyalty dwindles. The ease with which jobs and relationships are abandoned is increasingly pervasive. The diligence and resilience facilitated by Jesus' instructions serve as a stark contrast to the diminished staying power of our present generations and encourage us to suffer and embrace trials for the sake of God's mission.

I will ask God that routine and familiarity do not desensitise me to His leading. Instead, I will welcome challenges and openings that arise from venturing outside my comfort zone.

I will be alert to divine appointments in my encounters with others, seeking to establish meaningful connections and extend care and support to them, even at great cost.

Observing the sacrifices of the earliest followers and John the Baptist's unwavering stance at the expense of his life, I will boldly stand firm in godly convictions. Like the disciples, I take assurance from the authority that Jesus has given us. With that, I shall obediently and courageously pursue righteousness, and convey the message of repentance and salvation through Christ. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What item of familiarity and security are you hanging on to that impedes you from thriving in His ministry?
2. How can you purposefully identify opportunities to share the Gospel and demonstrate the transformative power of the Holy Spirit? Could you, for example:
 - a. battle an irregular, unjust or malicious situation in the workplace that you have been passively witnessing?
 - b. approach a troublesome relationship at work with renewed vigour, kindness, positivity and grace, trusting in God to bring about a breakthrough?
3. What is the one thing you could do in this Year of Discipleship in the Workplace? Commit this to prayer.

[MARK 6:30-44]

Jesus Feeds The Five Thousand

³⁰The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. ³¹Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.”

³²So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. ³³But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. ³⁴When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

³⁵By this time it was late in the day, so his disciples came to him. “This is a remote place,” they said, “and it’s already very late. ³⁶Send the people away so that they can go to the surrounding countryside and villages and buy themselves something to eat.”

³⁷But he answered, “You give them something to eat.”

They said to him, “That would take more than half a year’s wages! Are we to go and spend that much on bread and give it to them to eat?”

³⁸“How many loaves do you have?” he asked. “Go and see.”

When they found out, they said, “Five—and two fish.”

³⁹Then Jesus directed them to have all the people sit down in groups on the green grass. ⁴⁰So they sat down in groups of hundreds and fifties. ⁴¹Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people. He also divided the two fish among them all. ⁴²They all ate and were satisfied, ⁴³and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces of bread and fish. ⁴⁴The number of the men who had eaten was five thousand.

You Give Them Something to Eat

By Liana Seah, Chairperson, BeTWEEN Ministry

When I read this very familiar passage this time, it spoke to me quite differently. Instead of seeing from the little boy’s perspective, what stood out was the responses of the disciples. I can relate to their frustration and annoyance. I imagine

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myself in this scenario. I had just finished a long project and I was looking forward to a nice break to recharge. But just before I went on my well-deserved rest, another team came to ask for help and my manager agreed to stay back and help them. What would my reaction and attitude be like?

Would I use this opportunity to extend help? To help them means I must first take time to understand the issue and come up with a solution. This would translate to sacrifices of not only the time to rest but even to jeopardise my own productivity since I have to first learn and find out more before I can help them.

Through this passage, I'm reminded not to see my colleagues in need as a problem to fix, but to see it as an opportunity to bear witness by showing love and care and to let them see God's goodness in their lives.

Instead of seeing it as a problem to fix, I pray that God will allow me to see the person who could use support and care.

I must make myself available to them and for God to work in and through me. Instead of putting pressure on myself to come up with solutions to their problems, I will take the time to pray for wisdom as well as for resources which may not even come from myself. God may use me to solve the problem, or God may use me to just be the listening ears. I will pray that they will see God's hands at work and give honour to Him. When the workplace is made of a team of people who work for the Lord and see His handprint, we will have less striving and anxiety. From there, the workplace will be a better environment where everyone works in peace together, not competing with one another.

I will put my trust in God's providence, knowing that God will use my five loaves and two fishes for a good outcome in His Kingdom work on earth. God is more than able to provide more than what I need. I want to be more aware of His handprint in the workplace so that I can also fully rest in Him while I give Him my best work. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What was the disciples' response to the crowd? What was Jesus' response?
2. Does tiredness prevent you from doing good to others?
3. Cite examples when God multiplies your Five Loaves and Two Fishes for His purposes. Give thanks to God.

[MARK 6:45-56]

Jesus Walks On The Water

⁴⁵Immediately Jesus made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶After leaving them, he went up on a mountainside to pray.

⁴⁷Later that night, the boat was in the middle of the lake, and he was alone on land.

⁴⁸He saw the disciples straining at the oars, because the wind was against them. Shortly before dawn he went out to them, walking on the lake. He was about to pass by them, ⁴⁹but when they saw him walking on the lake, they thought he was a ghost. They cried out, ⁵⁰because they all saw him and were terrified.

Immediately he spoke to them and said, “Take courage! It is I. Don’t be afraid.”

⁵¹Then he climbed into the boat with them, and the wind died down. They were completely amazed, ⁵²for they had not understood about the loaves; their hearts were hardened.

⁵³When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. ⁵⁴As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. ⁵⁵They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. ⁵⁶And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Walking On Water With Jesus

By Lucas Chow, Steward, Local Church Executive Committee

When I was young, I saw in a sword fighting movie that the actor actually walked on water. Later, it was revealed that there were supports just beneath the water surface so that the actor appeared to be “walking on water”.

In today’s passage, we know it wasn’t a trick. Jesus actually walked on rough water. As soon as He climbed into the boat, the wind died down. The significance

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of this is that it reminds me how great and awesome our God is. Even though the situation may be challenging and out of my control, I know if I fix my eyes on Jesus, I can rely on Him.

During the last Global Financial Crisis, there was a significant reduction in business for the company I worked for. I was faced with the situation of either retrenching 10 per cent of the employees or not having enough money to pay their salaries. At my wits' end, I prayed hard for wisdom and God's guidance. Then one morning during my quiet time, an idea came to me. If I could convince the employees to work 10 per cent less and take a salary cut accordingly, we could avoid the retrenchment. That was exactly how the company survived the crisis. No one was retrenched and the company recovered soon after the crisis as the entire team was intact.

I need to be reminded about this often even though I have experienced God's goodness and blessings on numerous occasions. My tendency is to rely on myself when faced with work life challenges. I often focus on the situation and not fix my eyes on Jesus. I should practise recalling more often those times when God showed me grace and saw me through tough situations. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. How will you remember how God has led you through challenging times? Do you keep a journal?
2. What challenges are you facing now? How will your past encounter with God help you in your current situation?
3. How can you share your testimony of God's goodness and encourage others in the workplace who may be facing difficulties in trusting God?

[MARK 7:1-23]

That Which Defiles

¹The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ²and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³(The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

⁵So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, “Why don’t your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?”

⁶He replied, “Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: ““These people honour me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

⁷They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.”

⁸You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions.”

⁹And he continued, “You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ¹⁰For Moses said, ‘Honour your father and mother,’ and, ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’

¹¹But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— ¹²then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. ¹³Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that.”

¹⁴Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, “Listen to me, everyone, and understand this. ¹⁵Nothing outside a person can defile them by going into them. Rather, it is what comes out of a person that defiles them.”¹⁶

¹⁷After he had left the crowd and entered the house, his disciples asked him about this parable. ¹⁸“Are you so dull?” he asked. “Don’t you see that nothing that enters a person from the outside can defile them? ¹⁹For it doesn’t go into their heart but into their stomach, and then out of the body.” (In saying this, Jesus declared all foods clean.)

²⁰He went on: “What comes out of a person is what defiles them. ²¹For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, ²²adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly.

²³All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”

It Is What Comes Out Of A Person That Defiles

By Philip Oh, Chairperson, Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

As I read and reflected on Mark 7, two portions caught my attention as they had reminders and potential applications for me:

- 1) Verse 7 (CEV): "It is useless for you to worship me, when you teach rules made up by humans."

As a long-time facilitator and trainer for DISCIPLE classes, I wondered whether I was errant in over-emphasising any personal beliefs or preferences in an inappropriate way. After all, facilitators are always taught to point participants back to Scripture, where the truth lies. Where necessary, we help each other struggle with the living Word, through prayer, searching the Scriptures and asking God for wisdom and discernment!

- 2) Verses 18 to 20 (CEV): "...the food you put into your mouth cannot make you unclean" and "... what comes from your heart is what makes you unclean."

I remember as a child the severe warnings we were given by elderly aunts and relatives that we must not consume coagulated blood found in the delicious Penang curry mee nor eat the delicious cakes frequently brought back by our black and white helpers (Mah-Cheh) from the Chinese temple!

I must be careful to follow Scripture wholly and not to dilute portions that are less palatable or less attractive to me or my participants.

I must always ask for God's wisdom and presence as I facilitate DISCIPLE classes. James 3:1 is ever present in my mind about the onerous responsibility and the clear reminder that "... you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."

Whilst verse 18 onward declared all foods clean, I must make sure that my actions do not stumble new Christians or those less conversant with Scripture. Whether it is the excessive consumption of alcohol that leads to loose words or eating food from another religious worship, I must make sure I am a good example to those that observe my behaviour. I must also make sure I do not stumble a fellow believer, to not leave doubt or confusion in another's mind. "If in doubt, don't!" ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. In your marketplace, have you encountered family or cultural traditions that have clashed with Bible teachings? How did you personally deal with the matter?
2. To what extent is your marketplace life kept separate and distinct from your church life? Why is that so?
3. In what way is Jesus' view of becoming unclean different from that of the Pharisees?

Note:

Mark 7:24-30 will be the Scripture passage for the sermons on Sunday, 3 March 2024.

Jesus Heals A Deaf And Mute Man

³¹Then Jesus left the vicinity of Tyre and went through Sidon, down to the Sea of Galilee and into the region of the Decapolis. ³²There some people brought to him a man who was deaf and could hardly talk, and they begged Jesus to place his hand on him.

³³After he took him aside, away from the crowd, Jesus put his fingers into the man's ears. Then he spit and touched the man's tongue. ³⁴He looked up to heaven and with a deep sigh said to him, "Ephphatha!" (which means "Be opened!"). ³⁵At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he began to speak plainly.

³⁶Jesus commanded them not to tell anyone. But the more he did so, the more they kept talking about it. ³⁷People were overwhelmed with amazement. "He has done everything well," they said. "He even makes the deaf hear and the mute speak."

Fallibility Of Man

By **David Mok**, Chairperson, Church Analytics Ministry

As I read Mark 7:31-37, verse 34 stood out for me.

According to the passage, Jesus travelled from Tyre to the Decapolis region. The people there pleaded with Jesus to heal a deaf man who had a speech impediment. Jesus then led him away from the crowd to treat him in private. Why Jesus wanted to heal this deaf man away from publicity is unknown. By this time, there should have been no mystery regarding Jesus' capacity to heal as He had already commenced His healing ministry. All that was known was Jesus "commanded them not to tell anyone" (verse 36), indicating that He wanted privacy.

In this incident, it is recorded that Jesus sighed heavily before He performed the healing. This is rather unusual as He had been healing scores of people before. My takeaway is that Jesus was struggling between the foreknowledge of the men's disobedience and His compassion for the deaf man. Jesus specifically told the men

around Him not to tell anyone, but He also knew that they would disobey Him (and they did). Torn between compassion and the predicted disobedience, He went ahead in love to heal the man. In that struggle of emotions, He let out a groaning sigh.

How many times have I, after experiencing the grace of God, immediately sleepwalked into disobedience again? It was just a few weeks ago that I remarked to my wife how God had changed me from an impatient driver to a calmer person behind the wheel. I was thankful and grateful. No sooner had I made that remark, on the very next day while I was driving, I raised an exasperated hand at an inconsiderate driver! The minute I raised my hand, I found myself experiencing the 'crow of the rooster' moment. I found myself not extending grace to the driver when I was supposed to. I can imagine our Lord rolling his eyes at me the moment I raised my hand at the driver. After all the work He had done to change my self-righteous heart, our Lord has every reason to sigh at me!

I will remind myself that there are many areas in my life that still need changing for the better - towards Christlikeness. I have to believe that I can still change and more importantly, I need that desire to change. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. List the one or two times where you thought you had changed, only to repeat the same wrongdoing. What can you do to prevent this from happening?
2. Are there areas in your life where you can be more Christlike? Commit these areas to God.
3. Why do you think Jesus asked the people not to tell anyone about the miracles he had performed? How can this apply to you?

[MARK 8:1-10]

Jesus Feeds The Four Thousand

¹During those days another large crowd gathered. Since they had nothing to eat, Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ²“I have compassion for these people; they have already been with me three days and have nothing to eat. ³If I send them home hungry, they will collapse on the way, because some of them have come a long distance.”

⁴His disciples answered, “But where in this remote place can anyone get enough bread to feed them?”

⁵“How many loaves do you have?” Jesus asked.

“Seven,” they replied.

⁶He told the crowd to sit down on the ground. When he had taken the seven loaves and given thanks, he broke them and gave them to his disciples to distribute to the people, and they did so. ⁷They had a few small fish as well; he gave thanks for them also and told the disciples to distribute them. ⁸The people ate and were satisfied. Afterward the disciples picked up seven basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over. ⁹About four thousand were present. After he had sent them away, ¹⁰he got into the boat with his disciples and went to the region of Dalmanutha.

God Will Provide

By Alvin Chua, Chairperson, Christian Outreach & Social Concerns

“God will provide!” These words are so often heard, spoken and contemplated in my mind. I wonder, do I really wholeheartedly believe these words, even in times with seemingly unfavourable or doubtful situations?

Years ago, as I was serving as an assistant small group leader, a staff member from the Small Group Ministry (SGM) invited me to their annual retreat, to which I gladly agreed.

At the retreat, as I was listening to a presentation by the ministry leaders, I was impressed by the great leadership qualities they displayed. A sense of admiration grew, and yet a feeling of inferiority also started to creep in.

A few days later, the SGM staff who invited me to the retreat and whom I very much respect, called to offer me a role as an assistant zone leader. Though I felt honoured, I decisively rejected the offer. I told him that I certainly do not possess the qualities to be a leader like the rest; I can't even pray properly!

After that, both my small group leader and zone leader met me for a dinner fellowship. They encouraged and challenged me to take up the role, and even explored my weaknesses and strengths with me. At the end of the dinner, I still felt that my 'few loaves of bread and small fishes' are not enough for this leadership role!

Strangely, before we left, a stranger seated at the next table overheard our conversation. She boldly stood up to tell me a revelation from God. She said: "God will use you to do great things for His kingdom!" A prophecy from a stranger!? (I guess I took it with a pinch of salt at that moment).

Despite my weak faith, these words have continued to resonate in every part of my life. I am grateful that I played a role in bringing many loved ones to faith in Christ: my daughters, both my parents and my sister-in-law.

At the marketplace, while I perform reasonably well by God's grace, more kingdom work has yet to be done. Serving in the Christian Outreach & Social Concerns (COSC) ministry, God has given me a vision to reach out to the increasing needs of society at Jalan Berseh. I pray for God to send more workers for the harvest is plentiful.

As I fearfully responded to God's calling to serve in various roles, He provided everything I needed and enabled me to overcome many weaknesses, obstacles and fear. Indeed, when I offered my 'few loaves of bread and small fishes' in faith, God multiplied them and provided the rest! ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Can you recall an event where God provided a solution to your seemingly 'impossible task'? Give thanks and remember it as an anchor in your faith.
2. Is there any task/problem that you think is too hard for you to handle on your own? Submit it to the Lord.
3. Will you offer your 'few loaves of bread and small fishes' to reach out to the least, the last and the lost in society and be a witness for God?

¹¹The Pharisees came and began to question Jesus. To test him, they asked him for a sign from heaven. ¹²He sighed deeply and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to it.” ¹³Then he left them, got back into the boat and crossed to the other side.

The Yeast Of The Pharisees And Herod

¹⁴The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵“Be careful,” Jesus warned them. “Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees and that of Herod.”

¹⁶They discussed this with one another and said, “It is because we have no bread.”

¹⁷Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: “Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don’t you remember? ¹⁹When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

“Twelve,” they replied.

²⁰“And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?”

They answered, “Seven.”

²¹He said to them, “Do you still not understand?”

Have I Forgotten and Not Understood?

By Alex Seow, Assistant Secretary, Local Church Executive Committee

“...And do you not remember?” (verse 18, NKJV)

As much as the disciples were with Christ day in and day out and witnessed His awesome powers, they often got caught up and distracted with things and events happening around them. They simply forgot what Christ could do.

I too have seen and experienced the goodness and power of God in countless ways through the years. I'll never forget how He preserved my life after I was hit by a motorbike in Thailand and suffered nothing more than fractures in my left leg, abrasions and bruises. Furthermore, in the same incident, God prevented an oncoming car on the opposite lane from running me over after I was hit by the motorbike. Till today, I still cannot fathom what exactly had happened. He has further seen me through several difficult life situations.

Yet in the midst of my walk with God, I too sometimes forget how good and awesome He is.

"...How is it you do not understand?" (verse 21, NKJV)

Apart from my forgetfulness, I don't always see God's hand nor comprehend what He is doing. I don't understand many things, especially when loved ones have cancer or a serious illness, when a faithful servant of God dies suddenly, when I see severely handicapped persons or injustice in society. A few nights ago, an aged and frail "aunty" with a hunchback cleaned my table at a hawker centre after I had dinner. I was filled with sadness. I felt a sense of injustice. I just could not understand why life had to be this way for her.

God then reminded me as He did with Job, "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding" (Job 38:4, NKJV) He reminded me that He IS the Great I Am. He is IN the midst of everything and sustaining His people and the world all the time.

I have come to a simple conclusion:

- I do not need to know the Why of everything that happens, but I do need to understand the Who, because Jesus will take care of everything.
- I do need to remember What He has done for me.

I will count my blessings each day – whether big or small.

I will recall my blessings of the past.

I will trust Him even when I don't see His hand or understand – for He has shown His faithfulness and I know He will always be faithful to me.

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Dear Lord, keep my eyes open to your miracles and blessings in my life each and every day. There are things I do not understand but I trust in Your unfailing love for me. Allow me to see beyond my present circumstances through Your eyes. May I never take You for granted but remember Your blessings that sustain me daily. In Your name I pray, Amen. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Why do you think the disciples, having seen Jesus feed 5,000 people with just five loaves, were still worried about having no bread?
2. Are you also guilty of doubting God's goodness despite receiving many blessings from Him?
3. How may we count our blessings from God, and remember them?

[MARK 8:22-38; 9:1]

Jesus Heals A Blind Man At Bethsaida

²²They came to Bethsaida, and some people brought a blind man and begged Jesus to touch him. ²³He took the blind man by the hand and led him outside the village. When he had spit on the man's eyes and put his hands on him, Jesus asked, "Do you see anything?"

²⁴He looked up and said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around."

²⁵Once more Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes. Then his eyes were opened, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶Jesus sent him home, saying, "Don't even go into the village."

Peter Declares That Jesus Is The Messiah

²⁷Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?"

²⁸They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets."

²⁹"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

Peter answered, "You are the Messiah."

³⁰Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him.

Jesus Predicts His Death

³¹He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³²He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

³³But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

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The Way Of The Cross

³⁴Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. ³⁶What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? ³⁷Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? ³⁸If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels.”

Mark 9: ¹And he said to them, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

People Like Trees

By *Charis Lim, Chairperson, Digital Wesley*

The following passage from Mark 8:24 (NIV) stands out for me:

²⁴He looked up and said, “I see people; they look like trees walking around.”

The healing of this blind man is quite unlike any other healing that took place during the earthly ministry of Jesus. Typically, when Jesus performed a miracle, the person healed was restored at once. However, this healing of the blind man was protracted and took place in stages. At first he could not see at all. Then he saw people that looked “like trees walking around”. And finally, he saw clearly.

When I had a sore eye some years back during the pandemic, it was a great inconvenience as I couldn’t see people well on the computer screen over zoom meetings. Everything looked blurry and I wished I could see clearly. But isn’t this like life? We don’t like blurry. We want to see clearly immediately. We hate uncertainty. I can imagine the blind man wondering, why am I not fully healed? Jesus, you healed the woman with the issue of blood with just one touch of your garment. What’s happening here? And I believe God is saying to the blind man, “Don’t give up when the first touch didn’t work”. I wonder whether God wants me to have the tenacity to declare that even if I don’t see the full picture, when things are blurry, and when there is no clarity in my situation, I’m still going to seek God until I see fully. For it is in leaning closer to God that I start seeing more deeply the lessons He has for me.

The blind man said, "I see people; they look like trees walking around." That is an odd thing for a blind man to say. How was he able to describe people as though they were trees? If he could describe it, he must have seen trees before in order to make the comparison. I believe it is because this is not a miracle of a man seeing for the first time. But this is a man who could see before. He was not born blind, he remembered what trees looked like. That means Jesus was restoring His sight. The lesson for me is that what I lost before, God is powerful to restore. Our God is a God of restoration. What we remember of things past, God can restore and do more than that. But the restoration didn't come until he was honest about things being blurry. Just as the blind man had the honesty to say it was not clear, perhaps God wants me to come before Him as well in that posture of utter dependence on Him.

Father in heaven, thank You that even in a season where things are blurry, where there is uncertainty and I do not see with clarity, you are calling us to be a "people like trees" who are planted and grounded in Jesus, growing in dependence on Him and bearing much fruit for His glory.

As the Psalmist declares in Psalm 1:3, "That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers."

I claim this promise for my life today!

In Jesus' name. Amen. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What are some of the uncertainties you are facing where you need the Lord's clarity today?
2. Name those things in your life where you need God to restore in the fullness of His perfect plan and time.
3. How can we be "People like trees" who are planted and grounded in Christ in our workplaces, schools and homes so that others around us may also be drawn to the living waters of God?

The Transfiguration

²After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. ³His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. ⁴And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.

⁵Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah.” ⁶(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

⁷Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: “This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!”

⁸Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead. ¹⁰They kept the matter to themselves, discussing what “rising from the dead” meant.

¹¹And they asked him, “Why do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?”

¹²Jesus replied, “To be sure, Elijah does come first, and restores all things. Why then is it written that the Son of Man must suffer much and be rejected? ¹³But I tell you, Elijah has come, and they have done to him everything they wished, just as it is written about him.”

Listen to Him

By Alex Lai, Vice Chairman, Local Church Executive Committee

When I first read the passage that was assigned to me, I was dumbfounded as it was on the transfiguration of Jesus. To be honest, I struggled with this reflection as this passage is hard to understand.

We are told that Jesus took Peter, James and John to a mountain to pray. While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured and His clothes became radiant. After that, Moses and Elijah appeared and strangely, Peter suggested building three tents for them. Then, a voice from the cloud said, “This is my son, whom I love.

Listen to Him!" Then, Moses and Elijah disappeared.

If I were present at the scene, I would be overwhelmed and not know how to react. In an attempt to make sense of the situation, I would probably be like Peter and utter something that does not make sense. Therein lies the problem. In my struggle to understand and make sense of the complex and challenging world that we live in, I tend to frame my perceptions and thoughts through my own lens and experiences. I need to have an answer to every question and understand everything that I am going through. But just as the voice from the cloud said, I simply need to listen to Jesus and obey what He says. I need to interpret our world through His Word.

When I left the banking industry 18 months ago to join a multi-family office, I took a leap of faith as that would mean not drawing a monthly salary. At that time, I felt God assuring me that this was the right move for me. After six months, the client accounts were still not set up and the situation looked bleak, doubts began to creep in and I wrestled with God every day. Why was God not answering my prayers? Why did God not stop me from changing jobs? Why was God not helping me? But in the midst of my despair, I sensed God's assurance that all would be fine. I remember God's promise that though we may stumble, we will not fall, for He holds us by the hand. Eventually, the client accounts were set up successfully, and God even opened new doors and blessed me with new clients. In every situation that I do not understand, I just have to listen to Him, to trust and obey Him. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Are you facing challenges in your workplace that you do not understand?
2. What is God saying to you about your situation?
3. Will you listen to Him and obey what He says?

[MARK 9:14-29]

Jesus Heals a Boy Possessed by an Impure Spirit

¹⁴When they came to the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and the teachers of the law arguing with them. ¹⁵As soon as all the people saw Jesus, they were overwhelmed with wonder and ran to greet him.

¹⁶“What are you arguing with them about?” he asked.

¹⁷A man in the crowd answered, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that has robbed him of speech. ¹⁸Whenever it seizes him, it throws him to the ground. He foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive out the spirit, but they could not.”

¹⁹“You unbelieving generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring the boy to me.”

²⁰So they brought him. When the spirit saw Jesus, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell to the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth.

²¹Jesus asked the boy’s father, “How long has he been like this?”

“From childhood,” he answered. ²²“It has often thrown him into fire or water to kill him. But if you can do anything, take pity on us and help us.”

²³“If you can?” said Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who believes.”

²⁴Immediately the boy’s father exclaimed, “I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”

²⁵When Jesus saw that a crowd was running to the scene, he rebuked the impure spirit. “You deaf and mute spirit,” he said, “I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.”

²⁶The spirit shrieked, convulsed him violently and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He’s dead.” ²⁷But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him to his feet, and he stood up.

²⁸After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we drive it out?”

²⁹He replied, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”

Everything Is Possible For The One Who Believes

By Nijendra Mahendra, Chairperson, Prayer & Praise

After I came to faith in Christ, the first major work that the Lord did in my life was through my workplace. He started shifting my perspective of how to do business. During these early years of my faith, I struggled tremendously between the ethical practices in the industry and the deep convictions of how counter culturally Jesus wanted me to conduct my business. During this intense period of struggling, my life was full of uncertainty, financial fear, anxiety, doubts, and I fell into a place of deep depression. Thankfully, God provided me with a very supportive prayerful wife and a few brothers who came alongside to journey with me, to help me stay on the narrow path. I felt like the boy in the scripture text and Jesus saying with compassion, 'Bring the boy to me'. After 2 years, the Lord brought me out of my depression, and I started to run my business God's way with integrity, honesty, and excellence. My colleagues and work partners in my industry then felt that I was of no more use. But I started to see His Hand of power, providence, and blessings. Like in verse 27, Jesus took me by the hand and lifted me to my feet again, and I could stand up. But I had changed. I now stood not on my own ability, strength, wisdom, or knowledge but on the promises of a God who loves me because He is my Heavenly Father.

Fast forward 20 years and I am still running my business in the construction industry, running it God's way, and just relying and waiting upon Him. I can certainly testify that He has kept me standing. The tap of providence from heaven continues to flow as I do things His way and rely solely on Him. God has also given me abundant opportunities to witness, testify and share the gospel with others in my industry over the years. The words of Jesus in verse 23, carry so much weight for me now. Everything is possible for the one who believes.

May this season of Lent bring us closer to our Lord in prayer. As we do so, may we also bring others who need healing to meet the Risen Christ! ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Is there something that Jesus wants you to do differently at your workplace?
2. Is there anyone at your workplace going through deep struggles? Could Jesus be asking you to bring them to Him?
3. How can you get involved in praying regularly for your colleagues, clients, and workplace vendors?

Jesus Predicts His Death A Second Time

³⁰They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, ³¹because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” ³²But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.

³³They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” ³⁴But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest.

³⁵Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”

³⁶He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷“Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

Whoever Is Not Against Us Is For Us

³⁸“Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”

³⁹“Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.

Causing To Stumble

⁴²“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.^[44] ⁴⁵And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.^[46] ⁴⁷And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” ⁴⁹Everyone will be salted with fire.

⁵⁰“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.”

I Do Not Want To Go To Hell

By Eric Ang, Chairperson, Finance

I am in the last season of my life, having reached the age of 71. Looking back, I am very thankful for my many blessings but I have also have my fair share of regrets that I wish never came to pass.

Another year has passed by so quickly but it didn't go unnoticed as I could see and feel my mortal body changing. Bladder control is one, dozing off ever so frequently is another. My foot remains on the accelerator but I am rapidly losing speed. Reality has set in. I am no longer able to do the things I can and wish to do.

My assigned scripture passage is a timely wake up call. How prepared am I when my life on earth is spent? Jesus is telling me that hell is not where I want to be: the worms that eat the people in hell never die, the fire there is unquenchable (verses 43-48 ERV). People there will be crying and grinding their teeth in pain (Matt 8:12, 13:42, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30).

How is it possible that I could land myself in hell when I chose eternal life over eternal death? This is because sinful desires which begin in my heart (James 1:14) can lead to a sinful life.

However, Jesus is reassuring me that it is not too late as there is hope in Him. Jesus loves me but hates sin. His death and resurrection (verse 31) give me power over sin and death. I can't fight sin on my own but with God's power, I can fight temptation. God will sanctify me through my faith (verse 49).

I do not want to go to hell. With whatever remaining time I have, this is my call to do the following:

1. Turn my eyes upon Jesus and look full in his wonderful face. This is the only way not to let sin have dominance over my life.
2. Enjoy my daily walk with the Lord. Savour every moment with Him. This is not the time to take a back seat and live a sedentary life on my own.

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3. Use my remaining time intentionally. Be the salt that God intended me to be. Share the good news and the bad news as there are many who do not understand and do not ask.

Allow me to conclude my devotion with Psalms 27:4 that says it all for me: *"I ask only one thing from the Lord. This is what I want most: Let me live in the Lord's house all my life, enjoying the Lord's beauty and spending time in his palace."* ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What do you understand by this statement of Jesus: "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all"?
2. What must you do differently in order to be first in the context of Jesus' words?
3. How do you ensure that you will continue to run the race well, and more importantly, finish it well?

[MARK 10:1-16]

Divorce

¹Jesus then left that place and went into the region of Judea and across the Jordan. Again crowds of people came to him, and as was his custom, he taught them.

²Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”

³“What did Moses command you?” he replied.

⁴They said, “Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.”

⁵“It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,” Jesus replied. ⁶“But at the beginning of creation God ‘made them male and female.’ ⁷For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, ⁸and the two will become one flesh.’ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

¹⁰When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. ¹¹He answered, “Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. ¹²And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.”

The Little Children And Jesus

¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.” ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Reflecting God's Light

By Audrey Ng, Chairperson, Children's Ministry

Read: Mark 10: 13-16

The Little Children and Jesus

¹³People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. ¹⁴When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

Jesus always welcomed the children and like Him, the Children's Ministry welcomes our big family of children every weekend so the young ones can come to learn about God and encounter Him personally. In the Bible, Jesus tells stories explaining kingdom truths. I have had the privilege of re-telling these stories to the children I teach every weekend. These stories and object lessons are simple for a child to understand so they can receive the Word.

There are so many stories I love but I am sharing two of my favourite lessons which have ministered to me:

- Matthew 5:14-16 - "You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

God is the sun and we are the moon. The moon reflects the sun's light so moonlight shines over the earth when it is dark. The moon is not the source of the light, but a reflector. We all just need to reflect God's light to the world (to be like Jesus) by relying on the source of the light and be available to reflect His light all the time.

- Jeremiah 29:11 - "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future".

God's plan is like a jigsaw puzzle and each piece has a place on the puzzle. Every piece is precious in a puzzle and the puzzle cannot be completed without it, as each piece has a special shape and colour. You are like a puzzle piece that God has

a purpose and a place for in His plan. God made you special and He will reveal the plans that will prosper you as you find and take your place in His good plan.

I remember and cling to the simple Bible truths and use them to minister to others, and be a channel of blessing to them.

Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for adopting me as Your child. Please help me have childlike faith and help me to reflect You in my life. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. When sharing God's truths to pre-believers, simplifying the truths and our testimony may help. What would your testimony sound like if you have to explain it to a child?
2. Have you been a good reflection of God at the workplace?
3. Do you try to be like someone else instead of being yourself at the workplace? Are you seeking God for His special plans for you?

The Rich And The Kingdom Of God

¹⁷As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”

¹⁸“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone. ¹⁹You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’”

²⁰“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”

²¹Jesus looked at him and loved him. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”

²²At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

²³Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

²⁴The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! ²⁵It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”

²⁶The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?”

²⁷Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”

²⁸Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”

²⁹“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. ³¹But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

The Idols In Your Life

By Irwin Seet, Chairperson, Worship & Music

A friend of mine was very active in Church from a young age. However, as he got older and more successful in the corporate world, I noticed a gradual change in him. While he still attended church sporadically, I noticed that he was becoming very materialistic and would often share with me his goals of purchasing the latest sports car, branded watch or a new property that was being launched.

In today's passage, Jesus encountered a man who was besotted with his wealth and was not willing to give it up, even for the promise of eternal life. In his book *"Counterfeit Gods: The Empty Promises of Money, Sex and Power, and the Only Hope that Matters"*, Timothy Keller defines an idol as "anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give....An idol is whatever you look at and say, in your heart of hearts, "If I have that, then I'll feel my life has meaning, then I'll know I have value, then I'll feel significant and secure."

Idols do not have to just come in the form of material wealth. They can also come in the need for success, approval and validation from others, body image, sports, status, fear. As I reflect on my own life, I ask myself: what personal idols do I serve knowingly or unknowingly? Work is clearly one idol and the demands of work sometimes take my attention away from serving in church. The pursuit of wealth and possessions is also an idol that distracts me in my Christian walk.

The following are some practical steps that I can take to rid myself of these idols in my life:

1. Practise accountability in my small group.
2. Practise stewardship through time management and the giving of tithes.
3. Evaluate my heart daily to assess if there is anything or person that is taking first place over God, and repent before God.
4. Commit to fast from certain unhealthy past-times or inordinate affections which the Lord may reveal to me.
5. Practise spiritual disciplines.

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One of my favourite choruses has these words: "Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face. ***And the things of Earth will grow strangely dim***, in the light of His glory and grace." May each of us continue to fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Share with someone what idols you have in your life.
2. What are the dangers of having these idols?
3. What practical steps will you take to rid yourself of these idols in your life?

[MARK 10:32-45]

Jesus Predicts His Death A Third Time

³²They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. ³³“We are going up to Jerusalem,” he said, “and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, ³⁴who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise.”

The Request Of James And John

³⁵Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”

³⁶“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.

³⁷They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”

³⁸“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”

³⁹“We can,” they answered.

Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, ⁴⁰but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”

⁴¹When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. ⁴²Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Success Is Not Self-gratifying But Self-denying

By Song Tao, Chairperson, Youth Ministry

I was once tasked to plan and prepare for an important exercise at work. I had just joined a team with established standard operating procedures, and felt stressed as it was a new project that I had not undertaken before. In addition, the years of built-up procedures also had to be laid aside as we were in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic and the constraints we were working under were constantly changing.

I felt like I was headed towards a certain failure. Reading today's passage, I wonder if the disciples also felt similarly as they heard Jesus predict his death multiple times, and saw Him leading the way to His death in Jerusalem. I wonder if they thought about what His death might mean for their future as His disciples. At the time, the disciples thought that Jesus was about to restore Israel's political kingdom. To hear Jesus speak so frequently about His death and resurrection must have been disquieting (verse 32).

In their confusion, James and John sought to assure their future by asking to share in Jesus' glory and to be allowed to be seated by His side (verse 37). They were seeking guarantees for themselves. Yet Jesus did not promise them glory but asked whether James and John would be able to share in His suffering (verses 38-39).

Oftentimes, my ideas of success and my responses to chaos are like those of James and John. For me, during the planning of that exercise amid COVID, success had looked like being overly prepared. I proposed multiple contingency plans to anticipate every kind of exigency. As a new addition to the team, I wanted to be perceived as capable.

Yet Jesus' response to James and John in verse 38, as well as His subsequent teaching to the disciples in verses 42-43 remind me otherwise. I am reminded to follow Christ because He is worthy, not because I can gain from His reward. I am reminded that success is not self-gratifying but self-denying – even to the point of death.

When asked, James and John affirmed that they could share in Jesus' suffering. Although it is not clear whether James and John knew what they were saying yes to, history tells us that they eventually fulfilled their promise to Jesus to share in His suffering. I pray that I might have a fraction of their courage and the Holy Spirit to guide me in my unknowing. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Why do you follow Jesus?
2. How do you respond to Christ amid confusion and fear?
3. Do you dare drink from the cup that Jesus drinks from and share in His suffering?

Blind Bartimaeus Receives His Sight

⁴⁶Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging. ⁴⁷When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁸Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!”

⁴⁹Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.”

So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” ⁵⁰Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

⁵¹“What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.”

⁵²“Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Shut Out The Noise Of The World

By Tony Tng, Steward, Local Church Executive Committee

On the way to Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples, together with a large crowd, came to Jericho. Sitting by the street leading out of Jericho was blind Bartimaeus begging. Amidst the noise, Bartimaeus heard that the miracle healer, Jesus, was there. The crowd was excited, perhaps even a little chaotic, as they eagerly wanted to catch a glimpse of this miracle worker and Rabbi they had heard so much about. Casting aside the distracting noise, Bartimaeus called out to Jesus as he was in desperate need of Jesus’ healing touch. Persevering and staying focused, Bartimaeus wasn’t going to let the noise distract or drown out his repeated cry. At last, Jesus heard and healed him, not just physically but spiritually too. Bartimaeus thus had an amazing story to tell others as he followed Jesus.

More than a decade ago, I too was afflicted with an illness that required major surgery. There were many noises from well-meaning friends that distracted me from reaching out to Jesus. Fortunately, I had very supportive family members and small group members who gathered to pray with me. They helped me to stay focused and seek Jesus first. Yes, I did have surgery but the time leading up to it was peaceful because I knew that God would reach out to me as I had reached out to Him. God healed me physically and I drew closer to Him.

The world is a very noisy place. More than the noise made by people, vehicles and machines, it is the noise of materialism and worldly pleasures that could distract me from leading a life that is pleasing to our Lord. When my attention is directed towards such ills, Jesus can so easily be sidelined. I must persevere in my discipleship journey despite all the temptations of the world and stay focused on my end goals that nothing matters more than my salvation.

I will always remember to shut out the noise of the world and focus on reaching out to Jesus through my daily spiritual disciplines and rule of life. This is part of my discipleship journey. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What are the noises in the world that you would like to shut out?
2. What would you do to reach out to Jesus amidst the noise in the world?
3. Jesus asked Bartimaeus, "What do you want me to do for you?" (verse 51). Is there anything you would like Jesus to do for you? Say a prayer to Him.

[MARK 11:1-11]

Jesus Comes To Jerusalem As King

¹As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, ²saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. ³If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’”

⁴They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, ⁵some people standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” ⁶They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. ⁷When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. ⁸Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!”

“Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” ¹⁰“Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”

¹¹Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple courts. He looked around at everything, but since it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the Twelve.

Is Jesus The King In Your Workplace?

By ***Cheryl Seow***, President, Women's Society Of Christian Service

The crowd who witnessed Jesus triumphantly riding into Jerusalem on a colt, shouting praises in acknowledgement that Jesus was indeed the King and Messiah, were the very same people a few days later who would bow to political pressure and call for his crucifixion. This has made me wonder and reflect on whether I had ever acted like the crowd: praise God during Sunday church service, and then forget about Him or even deny him during work hours because it was simply “politically incorrect” or “inconvenient”.

While I had been a Christian since youth, I unfortunately do not recall sharing with colleagues that I was a Christian and details about my faith, especially in the early stages of my career. I was probably fearful of being “cancelled” (although in the

early 2000s, the term had yet to be coined!) by senior colleagues and peers who were of the view that the workplace should be secular.

By God's grace, in the past decade or so, I have managed to hold steadfast to my faith, to boldly declare and share about my faith with colleagues, and ex-colleagues whom I have kept in touch with. In recent years, as a Christian in the workplace (and indeed in any setting), I have often felt the Holy Spirit's prompting and reminder that my duty is to sow seeds of faith with the people I work with. Thus, how I live out my faith as a Christian is so important. This includes how I treat all colleagues, and my attitude and behaviour, especially in dealing with challenging situations. I do not wish to appear to be a stumbling block to anyone, whether they are believers or otherwise.

Admittedly, it has not been easy to do so. Long working hours, office politics, managing stakeholders and a team of colleagues, and having to handle difficult situations present various challenges. What has kept me grounded on my purpose as a Christian in the workplace in the face of such hurdles, is my daily walk with Jesus. He speaks to me daily through my reading of the Bible, daily devotions and prayers, and is my Great Navigator who has and continues to guide me through not only my career path, but this journey on earth. And for that, I am truly blessed and thankful. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Have you found it difficult to profess and share your faith in the workplace? If so, why?
2. Have you worked with, or encountered other Christians in the workplace who had acted in a way that stumbled your faith? If so, how did you handle the situation?
3. What do you think is God's purpose for you in the workplace?

[MARK 11:12-33]

Jesus Curses A Fig Tree And Clears The Temple Courts

¹²The next day as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. ¹³Seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to find out if it had any fruit. When he reached it, he found nothing but leaves, because it was not the season for figs. ¹⁴Then he said to the tree, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard him say it.

¹⁵On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple courts and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, ¹⁶and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. ¹⁷And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations’? But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’”

¹⁸The chief priests and the teachers of the law heard this and began looking for a way to kill him, for they feared him, because the whole crowd was amazed at his teaching.

¹⁹When evening came, Jesus and his disciples went out of the city.

²⁰In the morning, as they went along, they saw the fig tree withered from the roots.

²¹Peter remembered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!”

²²“Have faith in God,” Jesus answered. ²³“Truly I tell you, if anyone says to this mountain, ‘Go, throw yourself into the sea,’ and does not doubt in their heart but believes that what they say will happen, it will be done for them. ²⁴Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours. ²⁵And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins.”²⁶

The Authority Of Jesus Questioned

²⁷They arrived again in Jerusalem, and while Jesus was walking in the temple courts, the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders came to him. ²⁸“By what authority are you doing these things?” they asked. “And who gave you authority to do this?”

²⁹Jesus replied, “I will ask you one question. Answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. ³⁰John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin? Tell me!”

³¹They discussed it among themselves and said, “If we say, ‘From heaven,’ he will ask, ‘Then why didn’t you believe him?’ ³²But if we say, ‘Of human origin’ ...” (They feared the people, for everyone held that John really was a prophet.)

³³So they answered Jesus, “We don’t know.”

Jesus said, “Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things.”

Be the Pleasing Aroma of Christ

By Ng Chai Seng, Secretary, Local Church Executive Committee

In the passage, Jesus cursed the fig tree (verse 14). Later, Peter remembered this and said to Jesus, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree you cursed has withered!" (verse 21). Though the fig tree looks promising, it bears no fruit (like faith with no works to show - James 2:22-26). John 15 tells us that God cuts off every branch in Him that does not bear fruit.

It is also recorded that money exchange and the sale of animal sacrifices benefitted the merchants. In His righteous anger, Jesus overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves in the temple courts (verse 15). The house of worship had turned into a profiteering business.

They turned away the Gentiles from worshipping God with a barrier. But by His sacrificial death, Jesus has broken down all barriers, and all who have faith and believe in Him can have full access to God. There is no longer the need to offer animal sacrifices, for He Himself was the perfect sacrifice on the cross to redeem us from sin, once for all (Hebrews 7:27).

The lesson of the fig tree and the temple court reminds us to be fruitful and serve God's purpose.

I'm reminded by Rev Clement Ong in his sermon that we can bear fruit by bringing others hope through Christ and showing them His love through our words, thoughts and deeds.

If we are willing, God will prune us so that we will be even more fruitful (John 15:2).

I am reminded of the following encounters with stall owners in the hawker centres in which I tried to be fruitful for Christ:

- 1) the chef was nursing a back injury and I asked about the progress of his recovery;
- 2) the stall owner cut her finger and I offered her a band-aid;
- 3) the senior stall assistant asked me to repeat my orders a few times; I tried being patient and empathetic, even when he got the orders wrong sometimes.

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We learn from today's passage not to be "barriers" but the pleasing aroma of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:15). There are many opportunities to love and serve others in the following ways:

- 1) Consider the Scriptures in our Bible Reading Drive, Bible Study, devotion or sermons. Think of how we can express our gratitude to God for our salvation.
- 2) Consider people in their workplaces (healthcare, hawkers centres, church, school, home, office, service counters); give them a word of concern or encouragement.
- 3) Consider shifting our prayer focus from self to seeking God's kingdom purpose, acknowledging that He is our sovereign God. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Why do you think Jesus cursed the fig tree?
2. What kind of fruit are you producing for Jesus?
3. How might you be the pleasing aroma of Christ?

[MARK 12:1-17]

The Parable Of The Tenants

¹Jesus then began to speak to them in parables: “A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. ²At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. ³But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. ⁴Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. ⁵He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

⁶“He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’

⁷“But the tenants said to one another, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ ⁸So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

⁹“What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. ¹⁰Haven’t you read this passage of Scripture:

“‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; ¹¹the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’”

¹²Then the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.

Paying The Imperial Tax To Caesar

¹³Later they sent some of the Pharisees and Herodians to Jesus to catch him in his words. ¹⁴They came to him and said, “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are; but you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not? ¹⁵Should we pay or shouldn’t we?”

But Jesus knew their hypocrisy. “Why are you trying to trap me?” he asked. “Bring me a denarius and let me look at it.” ¹⁶They brought the coin, and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

“Caesar’s,” they replied.

¹⁷Then Jesus said to them, “Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

And they were amazed at him.

When God Sends A Messenger To You

By Vincent Hong, Chairperson, Mandarin Ministry

I keep asking myself this question as I read this passage over and over again. If I am the tenant who rented the vineyard from the landowner, will I be so foolish as to kill his servant who has come to collect some of the fruit of his own vineyard? It just doesn't sound logical to me because the vineyard doesn't belong to me in the first place; it belongs to the landowner. I would have treated his servant with my utmost respect and even given him the VIP treatment. But if the servant is sent to correct my wrongdoings or warn me against doing something improper to the vineyard entrusted to me, will I shut him out? Will I ignore him and turn a deaf ear? Or even worse, will I confront him and 'murder' him with my evil tongue? I think I may have done just such a thing without realising it.

As I reflect upon myself, be it in the corporate world, church or family, I recognise that I am not perfect and there will certainly be times when I am wrong about something or make wrong and terrible decisions. This parable reminds me that God may speak to me and send someone to be His messenger. I must not be defensive and be blinded by my own pride, but instead learn to be humble and be thankful and listen to those messengers.

I remember the Chinese idiom, 忠言逆耳 which literally means good/loyal advice jars on the ears. The essential difference between the wise and the foolish is what they do and how they react when someone is kind enough and willing to tell them the right from wrong. The fool insists he is right and 'kills' the messenger in one form or another, while the wise person listens, reflects and is willing to make changes.

Let this be a constant reminder to myself. I have been given responsibilities in different areas. It is by God's grace and mighty power that I have been given the privilege of serving Him by spreading this Good News (New Living Translation Ephesians 3:7). In every job God assigns me, my ultimate performance appraisal comes from Him. I must always keep an open mind and open heart to listen to feedback and be thankful for messengers from God who help me improve and run a better race for our Lord. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What is your takeaway from the Parable of the Tenants?
2. Were there times where God sent a messenger to speak truth to you?
How did you react?
3. In whatever you do, do you seek to please God or please man?

[MARK 12:18-44]

Marriage At The Resurrection

¹⁸Then the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to him with a question. ¹⁹“Teacher,” they said, “Moses wrote for us that if a man’s brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and raise up offspring for his brother. ²⁰Now there were seven brothers. The first one married and died without leaving any children. ²¹The second one married the widow, but he also died, leaving no child. It was the same with the third. ²²In fact, none of the seven left any children. Last of all, the woman died too. ²³At the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?”

²⁴Jesus replied, “Are you not in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God? ²⁵When the dead rise, they will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. ²⁶Now about the dead rising—have you not read in the Book of Moses, in the account of the burning bush, how God said to him, ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?’ ²⁷He is not the God of the dead, but of the living. You are badly mistaken!”

The Greatest Commandment

²⁸One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, “Of all the commandments, which is the most important?”

²⁹“The most important one,” answered Jesus, “is this: ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. ³⁰Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’”

³¹The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”

³²“Well said, teacher,” the man replied. “You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. ³³To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and with all your strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices.”

³⁴When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Whose Son Is The Messiah?

³⁵While Jesus was teaching in the temple courts, he asked, “Why do the teachers of the law say that the Messiah is the son of David? ³⁶David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared: “‘The Lord said to my Lord: “‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”

³⁷David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?”

The large crowd listened to him with delight.

Warning Against the Teachers of the Law

³⁸As he taught, Jesus said, “Watch out for the teachers of the law. They like to walk around in flowing robes and be greeted with respect in the marketplaces, ³⁹and have the most important seats in the synagogues and the places of honor at banquets. ⁴⁰They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. These men will be punished most severely.”

The Widow’s Offering

⁴¹Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. ⁴²But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents.

⁴³Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, “Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴⁴They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on.”

Get The Fundamentals Right – Love God, Love People

By Liu Yueh Mei, Chairperson, Information Systems Committee

When I first knew God, I loved God because I was touched by His immense love for me. Over time, this love deepens when I continue to spend time with Him. There are also times when this love lessens as I get complacent or busy.

What is God's desire for us?

Of all the commandments, the greatest commandment is “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30). Then Jesus says, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” (verse 31).

Everything else follows after these two commandments. If we get them right, we will have fewer struggles with God and with men, fewer struggles about what to do or not to do, what to give, how to give, how much to give, etc.

From this one commandment, we are asked to love God in 4 dimensions:

- with all our heart (recall that feeling when you fell in love with someone, the longing to talk and listen to, to know everything about that person)
- with all our soul (recall the relationship with a soulmate or confidante, sharing your most intimate thoughts, concerns, burdens)

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- with all your mind (love cognitively, with a clear mind)
- with all our strength (love that translates into action, that is not passive; recall all the things you do for your loved ones)

This one greatest commandment is definitely not trivial – it requires all of our being, to love from the inside out. If we love God to this extent, everything else will fall into place.

Then God asks us to extend this love to our neighbour, our fellow humans, sinners just like us.

One act of love is giving (Mark 12:41-44). A poor widow gave two copper coins out of her poverty as opposed to the rich ones who gave large amounts. It is easier to give out of riches but what about giving out of poverty? The concept of time poverty struck me. Have I given my prime time to God? Time to serve God, time to be with God? Giving out of poverty requires immense love for God before we are willing to sacrifice our time, money or other resources.

Oftentimes, be it family or work, if we get the fundamental principle right, it sets the path forward in the right direction. And the fundamental lies in whom we love as well as the extent of our love. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Have you loved God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength?
2. Think of a 'neighbour' to show love to.
3. How in your poverty would you like to give more to God, to show your love to Him?

[MARK 13:1-13]

The Destruction Of The Temple And Signs Of The End Times

¹As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, “Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!”

²“Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. “Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, ⁴“Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?”

⁵Jesus said to them: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁶Many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am he,’ and will deceive many. ⁷When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁸Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹“You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. ¹⁰And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. ¹¹Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit.

¹²“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. ¹³Everyone will hate you because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.

Ways To Express My Faith In The Workplace

By Tho Lye Sam, Chairperson, Lay Personnel Committee

In a world marred by conflicts, wars and natural disasters, the passage guides me to face these realities without alarm but be aware of the signs of the end times. It steers me away from fixating on predictions, urging instead a discerning mindset. While the timing remains unknown, it urges me to be on guard and spiritually prepared for whatever may come as the end draws nearer.

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How can I be spiritually prepared for the end times? For me, reading the scriptures regularly, meditating on His words, and spending time in prayer - all of these contribute to strengthening my faith. Equally important to me is being part of a community of believers, like a small group or a discipleship class. In these settings, we delve into the scriptures, discuss, learn and grow together in our discipleship journey. The support, encouragement, guidance, and prayers from these communities serve as my pillars during challenging and testing times.

God also tells me to share the gospel, and to make it a priority. The passage eases my worries about expressing myself, urging me to speak authentically and trust in the Holy Spirit's guidance. A transformation lesson was revealed to me a decade ago when, desperate for my dying father's salvation, I sought help from Pastor Philip. He said, "Don't preach to him, just show him your love." Following this heartfelt advice, it led to a miracle and the showing of God's grace. In his final weeks, my father, against the resistance of my mother, accepted Christ and was baptised.

This experience instilled in me diverse approaches to sharing the good news—by faith, with love, through actions, and by words. Integrating these learnings into sharing the gospel at the workplace is an area where I haven't done much, but it's something I ought to prioritise. Acts of kindness, sharing personal testimonies, quoting verses for encouragement, extending invitations to Alpha or church events, and offering prayers are ways through which I could express my faith in the workplace.

I pray for God's guidance and provision, not only for my own readiness, but also for a compassionate heart towards the lost. May He empower me to actively reach out to them, with the trust that they will come to know Jesus as their Saviour. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. What does Jesus say about God's work (sharing the good news; verse 10) in the midst of war and conflicts?
2. What are you doing about sharing the Gospel with others, especially those in your workplace?
3. How do you feel about Jesus' second coming? How are you preparing for His return?

[MARK 13:14-27]

¹⁴“When you see ‘the abomination that causes desolation’ standing where it does not belong—let the reader understand—then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁵Let no one on the housetop go down or enter the house to take anything out. ¹⁶Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁷How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ¹⁸Pray that this will not take place in winter, ¹⁹because those will be days of distress unequalled from the beginning, when God created the world, until now—and never to be equaled again.

²⁰“If the Lord had not cut short those days, no one would survive. But for the sake of the elect, whom he has chosen, he has shortened them. ²¹At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘Look, there he is!’ do not believe it. ²²For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²³So be on your guard; I have told you everything ahead of time.

²⁴“But in those days, following that distress, “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

²⁶“At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. ²⁷And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

Spiritual Preparedness

By **Roger Chan**, Chairperson, Small Group Ministry

The passage in Mark 13:14-27 serves as a poignant reminder of the significance of spiritual preparedness and vigilance amidst the approaching end times. Through these verses, we discern the urgency of readiness for Christ’s return and the unprecedented events before it, coupled with a caution against the pitfalls of false teachings.

Applying this passage to our lives necessitates a collective commitment to unity and a shared purpose of spiritual preparedness. It calls us to be vigilant against deception, engaging in Bible study and discussions to deepen our understanding of the truth. In our small groups or communities, mutual support becomes crucial

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as we pray for one another, hold each other accountable, and collectively study the Word to guard against falsehoods. Together, we can gently correct and guide each other in the pursuit of righteous living, share personal experiences that illuminate the hand of God in our lives and prepare each other for Christ's return.

I am grateful to God for placing me in Abundant Life, my current small group. Abundant Life has been an extraordinary blessing, fostering a supportive community of like-minded Christians who are pivotal to my personal growth. This small group has become a wellspring of accountability, encouragement, and shared faith experiences, profoundly impacting my relationship with God. Within the warm embrace of Abundant Life, genuine connections flourish, enabling us to navigate life's challenges collectively. The group's dedication to spiritual growth not only fortifies my faith but also instils a profound sense of purpose and joy. Through shared prayers, discussions, and unwavering mutual support, Abundant Life serves as a guiding light on my spiritual journey, leading me toward a deeper understanding of God's love and grace.

Let's pray for strength to support and encourage one another in our respective communities or small groups. May we stand united, discerning false teachings, and remain rooted in faith as we eagerly await the return of Christ. Together, may we live in unity and purpose, striving to be spiritually prepared and watchful for unfolding events. Amen. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. How does the idea of being spiritually prepared for Christ's return resonate with you? What steps can you take in your own life to be more spiritually prepared?
2. How can you contribute to spiritual growth, either with people you know or by exploring the idea of joining a group? How might being part of a community or small group strengthen your faith and help you avoid false teachings?
3. Consider the testimony about Abundant Life as a supportive small group. How has being part of a Christian community influenced your faith journey? Can you recall specific moments where shared prayers or discussions have played a role in deepening your understanding of God's love and grace?

[MARK 13:28-37]

²⁸“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Day And Hour Unknown

³²“But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch.

³⁵“Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷What I say to you, I say to everyone: ‘Watch!’”

Are You Ready For Jesus' Return?

By Tony Yeo, Steward, Local Church Executive Committee

In 2021, I had a health scare. I had always thought that I was ever ready to see my Father in Heaven but when the health scare came, it got me very worried. Was I really ready? Have I done all that God wants me to do? Have I fulfilled His will for me?

The health scare turned out to be a false alarm but it got me thinking. I have spent all my time on this earth looking after my family, trying to do my work well and serving in ministries in church but have I sufficiently prepared myself for the second coming of Jesus? Are my priorities in life correct?

Many Christians today think that the second coming of Jesus could be hundreds, thousands or even millions of years from now. There is no hurry. We have plenty of time to prepare for His second coming.

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The one thing that I learnt from my health scare is that my time and indeed, everyone's time on this earth is limited. I do not know when my limited time on this earth will end.

One thing, however, is certain and that is, Jesus will come again. Jesus tells us that even the "Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will never pass away". As Jesus' follower, I truly believe this and I can stake my life upon Jesus' words. But when will Jesus' second coming be? Does anyone know or can anyone foretell? The answer is, no one knows. Not even Jesus. "Only the Father knows".

Jesus tells us that He is the master of the house that has left His house and put His servants in charge. He is the master of the house and we, His followers, are the servants. I am "Therefore to keep watch" and to "Be on guard! Be alert!". What then should I do to prepare for Jesus' second coming? I have to spend my time studying Jesus' words as His follower and learn the lesson from the fig tree. I often pray for God's help, for healing, for mercy, for forgiveness, for blessings and in thanksgiving but I have not sufficiently spent the time to prepare myself and my family for Jesus' second coming, the most important event in my life, the impact and results of which will last for eternity.

What are my priorities in life? Are they the things that I own, the people around me or is it the Lord, my God? The Jesus whom I follow and the master of the house whom I know will come back again and when He does, I have to be ready to receive Him. This is and has to be the priority in my life.

This, then, is how I will prepare myself:

1. Worship and serve Him with a grateful heart;
2. Spend even more time to study His Word;
3. Discern His will for me;
4. Live each day according to His instructions and will for me;
5. Give my all to Him every day as it may be the day of Jesus' second coming. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. In this passage, Jesus told His disciples to "keep watch" (verses 34, 35 and 36). Why?
2. How are you keeping watch and preparing for Jesus' second coming?
3. If Jesus comes today, what do you think He would say to you?

[MARK 14:1-26]

Jesus Anointed At Bethany

¹Now the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread were only two days away, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were scheming to arrest Jesus secretly and kill him. ²“But not during the festival,” they said, “or the people may riot.”

³While he was in Bethany, reclining at the table in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, made of pure nard. She broke the jar and poured the perfume on his head.

⁴Some of those present were saying indignantly to one another, “Why this waste of perfume? ⁵It could have been sold for more than a year’s wages and the money given to the poor.” And they rebuked her harshly.

⁶“Leave her alone,” said Jesus. “Why are you bothering her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me. ⁸She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. ⁹Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.”

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over.

The Last Supper

¹²On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus’ disciples asked him, “Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

¹³So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴Say to the owner of the house he enters, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ ¹⁵He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.”

¹⁶The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

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¹⁷When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

¹⁹They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

²⁰“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

²¹The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

²²While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

²³Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. ²⁵“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

²⁶When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Greatest Gift

By Lynn Lau, Assistant Treasurer, Local Church Executive Committee

Mark 14:1-26 (ESV)

³...as [Jesus] was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. ⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, “Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.” And they scolded her. ⁶But Jesus said, “Leave her alone.... She has done a beautiful thing to me....”

¹⁷And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And as they were reclining at table... ²²And as they were eating, he took bread and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them and said, “Take, this is my body.” ²³And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.”

What is the greatest gift we own?

A wise worship minister said to me, "The greatest gift we have is the gift of Jesus, who redeemed us for eternal life, and life abundant. Anything else good which happens in life pales in comparison, and for all the difficult times, it is still bearable because we already have this greatest gift."

The woman with the alabaster jar gave her most valuable possession to Jesus. Would we also give Him our careers, our intellect, our savings, our children, our spouses/ girlfriends/ boyfriends, our power and influence, anything and everything, to acknowledge Him as the Lord of all, ruler of our hearts and minds?

When I read this passage, the following questions from the Lord came to mind: am I prepared to surrender everything to Him? Would I put Him above all else? I am reminded to surrender all the things that keep me busy, and prioritise Him as the Lord of each day, each year and all my life. "Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Is it possible to be so heavenly-minded that we are of no earthly good? As we surrender our lives, would we use our careers, our intellect, our savings, our power and influence in the marketplace to redeem God's kingdom on earth? At our marketplace and the relationships there, are we making godly decisions which glorify Him, seeking redemption of heaven on earth, making our spheres of influence more godly, more righteous, more hopeful, than when we started, to show the world that God is in our midst?

In my marketplace, how do I steward my responsibilities for His glory? In the area of finance where I have built career experience, how do I use financial world practices to solve worldly problems but which are also kingdom concerns, like creating improved access to the disadvantaged and restoring equity to the marginalised?

Grateful for the greatest gift from the Lord, I will continue to reflect on the above questions and seek Him to find how to be a better steward of His gifts. Thank you, Jesus for the greatest gift! ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Pause and ponder: what is God's greatest gift to you?
2. Rank the priorities in your life, and see what they look like. What are you prepared to surrender to Jesus?
3. What can you do in your marketplace to better steward God's gifts to you, and how would you use your gifts for kingdom concerns?

[MARK 14:27-52]

Jesus Predicts Peter's Denial

²⁷“You will all fall away,” Jesus told them, “for it is written: “I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.’

²⁸But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee.” ²⁹Peter declared, “Even if all fall away, I will not.”

³⁰“Truly I tell you,” Jesus answered, “today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times.”

³¹But Peter insisted emphatically, “Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you.” And all the others said the same.

Gethsemane

³²They went to a place called Gethsemane, and Jesus said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” ³³He took Peter, James and John along with him, and he began to be deeply distressed and troubled. ³⁴“My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,” he said to them. “Stay here and keep watch.”

³⁵Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. ³⁶“Abba, Father,” he said, “everything is possible for you. Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

³⁷Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. “Simon,” he said to Peter, “are you asleep? Couldn’t you keep watch for one hour? ³⁸Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

³⁹Once more he went away and prayed the same thing. ⁴⁰When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him.

⁴¹Returning the third time, he said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is delivered into the hands of sinners. ⁴²Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”

Jesus Arrested

⁴³Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders.

⁴⁴Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” ⁴⁵Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi!” and kissed him. ⁴⁶The men seized Jesus and arrested him. ⁴⁷Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.

⁴⁸“Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? ⁴⁹Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.” ⁵⁰Then everyone deserted him and fled.

⁵¹A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, ⁵²he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

The Struggle of the Flesh

By Adriel Loh, Chairperson, Church Governance and Risk Committee

The Scripture reading for today tells us of three events - first, Jesus' prediction of Peter's denial; second, Jesus' struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane; and third, Jesus' betrayal by Judas and arrest.

In these three events, we gain insight into the working of one of the key causes of our human struggle – what the Bible calls the “flesh”. The flesh is our fallen human nature that pulls us down every time we try to do something good. That is why Jesus cautioned in verse 38, “Watch and pray, lest you fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

First, we see the temptation to rely on the flesh. When Jesus predicted that His disciples would fall away, Peter stubbornly proclaimed that he would never fall away. In making such a claim, Peter was clearly relying on the flesh, his own human ability. When we, in our arrogance or pride, rely on our human ability to do something good, we will almost certainly fail.

Second, we see the temptation to give in to the desires of the flesh. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told His disciples to sit nearby and pray. But three times, He returned only to find them sleeping. Even though prayer was important, the disciples had given in to the desire of the flesh to sleep. The betrayal by Judas is

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another example. Whether Judas betrayed Jesus out of personal greed or was simply trying to take matters into his own hands, either way, Judas operated by the flesh and not the will of God. By contrast, Jesus Himself struggled with the flesh in the Garden of Gethsemane. Though He was fully God, He was also fully man. In verse 34, we see Him struggle in human weakness with overwhelming sorrow, and even prayed that He would not have to go through the Cross. Yet, unlike His disciples, He did not give in to the flesh. He surrendered Himself to His Heavenly Father and prayed, "Not what I will, but what You will."

Every day, I face the temptation to either rely on the flesh or give in to its desires. I will follow the model of Christ and surrender to God moment by moment. It is only then that He will, by His Spirit, give me the strength to overcome the flesh and live in victorious obedience to Him. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. List down three occasions in your life where the "spirit is willing but the flesh is weak".
2. Jesus told his disciples to "watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation". How do you prevent yourself from falling into temptation?
3. Were there times where you struggled to follow Jesus? Pray for the Lord to strengthen you.

[MARK 14:53-72]

Jesus Before The Sanhedrin

⁵³They took Jesus to the high priest, and all the chief priests, the elders and the teachers of the law came together. ⁵⁴Peter followed him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. There he sat with the guards and warmed himself at the fire.

⁵⁵The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. ⁵⁶Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

⁵⁷Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: ⁵⁸“We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” ⁵⁹Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

⁶⁰Then the high priest stood up before them and asked Jesus, “Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?” ⁶¹But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer.

Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?”

⁶²“I am,” said Jesus. “And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

⁶³The high priest tore his clothes. “Why do we need any more witnesses?” he asked.

⁶⁴“You have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?”

They all condemned him as worthy of death. ⁶⁵Then some began to spit at him; they blindfolded him, struck him with their fists, and said, “Prophesy!” And the guards took him and beat him.

Peter Disowns Jesus

⁶⁶While Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came by. ⁶⁷When she saw Peter warming himself, she looked closely at him. “You also were with that Nazarene, Jesus,” she said.

⁶⁸But he denied it. “I don’t know or understand what you’re talking about,” he said, and went out into the entryway.

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⁶⁹When the servant girl saw him there, she said again to those standing around, “This fellow is one of them.” ⁷⁰Again he denied it.

After a little while, those standing near said to Peter, “Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean.”

⁷¹He began to call down curses, and he swore to them, “I don’t know this man you’re talking about.”

⁷²Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows twice you will disown me three times.” And he broke down and wept.

Our Identity In Christ

By Patricia Yeo, Honorary Treasurer, Local Church Executive Committee

The Roman leaders and authorities were determined to prosecute Jesus but struggled with a consistent testimony against Him. Jesus was steadfast and did not succumb to their antagonistic attacks and accusations. He remained composed and continued to affirm His identity as the Son of Man. Peter denied that he knew Jesus when he was identified to be one of Jesus' followers.

The following points stood out for me:

The tide of popular sentiment can lend credence to falsehood and cause justice to be compromised.

Even Peter, when faced with potentially dire consequences of standing up to the truth, became afraid and lost his identity as a follower of Jesus. However, when Jesus was prosecuted, He held firmly to His identity and did not waver.

This led me to ponder on whether, when the going gets tough, would I compromise the truth to conform to the secular world or remain steadfast like Jesus? In the face of dire consequences, would I dissociate myself from being identified as a Christian?

I witnessed a situation in which a Christian colleague shared with me that she was going to speak up against someone who had misunderstood her for the things she felt she was doing right in the workplace. She prayed about it and was directed by God to be bold and to speak up with grace. While she suffered from the backlash of her actions and faced harsh consequences, things changed for the better after that. As events unfolded, I watched how God worked and how my colleague was used by Him to initiate the change, but she first had to take that step of obedience despite putting herself at risk. Just as Jesus was a sacrificial lamb for us, we too are sometimes called by God to make sacrifices in order to lay the foundation for a better future for others. To be rooted in our identity in Jesus, to be obedient to act when God calls, to be set apart and uphold righteousness against popular sentiment and suffer pain are all lessons I need to learn.

I pray that we will be able to carry our identity in Christ everywhere we go, and that every day, when there is an opportunity to act on our beliefs, we will seek God and rise to the occasion. ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. How often do you pray for your workplace and ask God to help you shine a light for Jesus there?
2. Do you disappear into the crowd like Peter so that you will not need to be identified as a Christian who bears the hallmark of Jesus?
3. Do you try to form support groups for others to help them grow in Christlikeness and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit?

[MARK 15:42-47]

The Burial Of Jesus

⁴²It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, ⁴³Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. ⁴⁴Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. ⁴⁵When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. ⁴⁶So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. ⁴⁷Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

Less Fear, More Faith

By Alvin Tay, Chairperson, Local Church Executive Committee

I would have expected one of the 11 disciples (excluding Judas) to ask for Jesus' body to bury him. But no, all his disciples had fled. It was left to Joseph of Arimathea who boldly went to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Joseph's courageous act was recorded in all 4 Gospels. He was a disciple of Jesus in secret, because he feared the Jewish leaders (John 19:38). A rich man (Matthew 27:57), Joseph was a prominent member of the Council who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God (Mark 15:43). He was a good and upright man, who had not consented to the Council's decision and action towards Jesus (Luke 23:50-51).

Unlike Peter, who denied Jesus three times, Joseph went boldly to ask for Jesus' body. Like the disciples, he also feared the Jewish leaders and had everything to lose. But he did the right thing because he cared about Jesus and wanted to give Him a proper burial. The 11 disciples were the closest to Jesus, having followed Him around in His ministry and had seen Him perform many miracles. We would expect them to be very grounded in their faith. Yet, they fled at the first sign of trouble. Joseph, on the other hand, followed Jesus from afar, yet he showed abundant faith when it was called for, even when doing the right thing could have cost him dearly.

Am I like Joseph, or like Peter, I wonder. I have been attending Bible study and spiritual formation courses like DISCIPLE and Companions in Christ for 10 years or more. I am serving God and seemingly walking closely with Jesus. But when trouble comes and hardship arises, will I succumb to fear and doubt? And walk away from Jesus?

Recently I was given a lesson in childlike faith. My eldest sister was diagnosed with a recurrence of cancer – stage 4 lung cancer. I was disappointed, of course, as she had accepted Christ only months earlier. I was worried she would regret doing so. My wife and I, together with my other sisters, were concerned how we should break the news to her. We discussed and came out with a strategy. It was not necessary. When we arrived at her hospital ward, the first thing she said to us was that she had seen a vision of Jesus. She also sensed the assurance of Jesus. And to our surprise, she took the bad news from the doctor very well. We were encouraged by her child like faith. She was like Joseph, overcoming her fear of cancer with faith in Christ. As I reflected on this passage, that episode came back to me. I am reminded of the resurrection hope of Jesus. In times of trouble and hardship, I will fix my eyes on Jesus and wait upon Him, no matter what my circumstances may be. Yes, it's only Saturday; Sunday is coming!

And just for the record, my sister persevered and was baptised on Christmas Day. Praise the Lord! ■

[Discussion Pointers]

1. Do you identify with Joseph, or the two Marys, or the disciples in this passage?
2. When trouble comes, will you doubt or deny Jesus?
3. How can you grow in faith?

Note:

Mark 15:1-41 will be the Scripture passage for Good Friday, 29 March 2024, and Mark 16:1-20 for Easter Sunday, 31 March 2024.

And with that, we complete our reading of the book of Mark and reflection during this Season of Lent.

Let's go forth to be better disciples of Jesus Christ and to reflect His light in our workplaces.

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER

MY REFLECTIONS

MY RESPONSES

MY PRAYER



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