



[THE E S S E N T I A L J E S U S]

100 READINGS THROUGH THE BIBLE'S GREATEST STORY



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The Rev. Richard Patterson, Jr. is an ordained Presbyterian minister living near Albany, NY. He serves as Scripture Union's Bible Guide Editor. Rev. Patterson is the author of several books including *Families with Faith*, (2007, Scripture Union) and has been on the staff of Scripture Union USA for more than 30 years.

The "Overview" sections of *The Essential Jesus Sermon Outlines* are excerpted from the book *The Essential Jesus* by Whitney T. Kuniholm, President of Scripture Union/USA.

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Overview Sections are excerpted from

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INTRODUCTION

The Essential Jesus Challenge is a church-wide Bible reading program built around a carefully selected list of short Bible passages from both the Old and New Testaments. It takes people through the Bible's greatest story—the story of Jesus—without getting bogged down.

The Essential Jesus Sermon Outlines is the companion resource that will help you synchronize your preaching with The Challenge. By doing so, your people will get more out of their journey through God's Word. And because they will have read your sermon text the previous week, they'll be better prepared to receive your message each Sunday.

You'll notice that The Essential Jesus Challenge is organized into 20 sets of 5 readings each. Your people should attempt to read one section per week. Then on Sunday, you can preach on one of the five passages from the previous week.

SCHEDULING THE CHALLENGE

As you begin to plan a preaching series for The Essential Jesus Challenge, you'll want to determine what schedule will work best for your congregation. Most churches choose one of the following three ways to schedule The Challenge:

- New Year** Begin in January and finish any time before the end of December.
- Seasonal** Old Testament readings (1-50) in September-November with a break for the Christmas season, then New Testament readings (51-100) in January-March leading up to Easter.
- Custom** Because the readings are undated, you can begin and end at any time of the year, based on the needs of your church.

After you've selected the way you'd like to schedule The Challenge, you can then use all the resources in the Pastor's Resources section of the website to promote the program. Your goal is to get as many people in the congregation as possible to agree to "take The Challenge."

USING THE SERMON OUTLINES

The Essential Jesus Sermon Outlines are just that...outlines. They give you a basic structure on which to build your sermon. They bring together the major themes from each of the 100 passages with the ideas in The Essential Jesus.

The outlines are intentionally brief. Why? Because the most important component is what you add, that is, your own insights, stories and applications. That's what will make your sermon come alive for your people.

Each of The Essential Jesus Sermon Outlines uses the following structure:

Title The sermon title is taken from the reading in The Essential Jesus. However, you should feel free to establish your own title if you wish.

Text This is a passage from The Essential Jesus.

Key Thought This is a statement for you, the pastor. It summarizes the main idea on which the outline is built.

Overview This is an excerpt from The Essential Jesus by Whitney T. Kuniholm, the book your people may use to read through The Essential Jesus Challenge. The excerpt gives you a quick summary of the passage and the key themes you may want to build on in your sermon.

Sermon Outline This is a brief set of key points you can use to create your sermon. Again, the most important part of the outline is what you will add. Feel free to customize the outlines by cutting and pasting them into your sermon document. You can do this by using the "text" tool in Adobe® Acrobat® Reader.

Challenge This is a statement intended for your congregation. It attempts to summarize a key application point in a memorable way.



FOLLOWING UP

It's helpful to provide additional resources to help your people keep going in God's Word after they complete The Essential Jesus Challenge. Scripture Union has a variety of other Bible reading resources for all ages that you can use to keep the momentum going. To find out more, check our website, www.EssentialJesusChallenge.com or www.ScriptureUnion.org, or call **1-800-621-LAMP (5267)**. If there's any other way we can support your ministry, please let us know. Thank you for your willingness to take The Essential Jesus Challenge! Our prayer is that God will use your leadership and this program to ignite a Bible reading revival in your church and community.

TAKE THE ESSENTIAL 100 CHALLENGE TOO!

The Essential 100 Challenge is another popular church-wide Bible reading program from Scripture Union. It is built around The Essential 100™, a list of short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament—which enables a person to get the big picture of the Bible without getting bogged down. Most passages are 1-2 chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The readings are carefully selected to cover all major types of biblical writing including Historical Books, Poetry and Wisdom, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The concept for The Essential 100™ was first described in a devotional book called The Essential Bible Guide by Scripture Union President Whitney T. Kuniholm.

For more information about The Essential 100 Challenge, visit www.E100Challenge.com or call **1-800-621-LAMP (5267)**.

CALL 1-800-621-LAMP (5267)

OR GO TO OUR WEBSITE

WWW.SCRIPTUREUNION.ORG

WHO IS JESUS?

Sermon Outlines

The Word Made Flesh

JOHN 1:1-18

Key Thought Jesus is God's ultimate self-revelation.

Overview Journalists think of their profession as a quest for truth; if they accurately report all the facts of a story then they believe they've told the whole truth. But as John begins his account of the life of Jesus, he realizes the truth goes far beyond mere facts. The man he lived alongside for three years was divine and human at the same time and the source of some incredible gifts.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus is a new source of light in the world (5-9).
 - a. It's a dark world of darkened hearts (John 3:19).
 - b. Jesus is the light of the world. (John 8:12).
 2. Jesus is the source of new life (4, 12).
 - a. He offers full, abundant life now (John 10:10; Eph. 2:4).
 - b. He offers eternal life (John 5:24, 14:6).
 3. Jesus is God come to earth (14).
 - a. The fullness of God is in Jesus (Col. 1:19).
 - b. Jesus and God the Father are One (John 10:30; Heb. 1:3).
 - c. Jesus claims to be God (John 8:58).

Challenge If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus.

Humbled Yet Exalted

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-11

Key Thought When Jesus lived on earth then, he showed us how to live today.

Overview The Apostle Paul was addressing a specific situation in this passage. He wanted the Christians in Philippi to be less selfish and more loving, compassionate, joyful and united. That's good advice for Christians in any town, at any time. But the question was how? Paul's answer was simple: live like Jesus. But first, he explained more about Jesus and how Jesus lived.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus humbled himself (6-8).
 - a. He voluntarily gave up his divine prerogatives (7).
 - b. Will you humbly serve the "lower" ones (Jas. 2:1-6; Matt. 25:31-40)?
 2. Jesus obeyed God (8).
 - a. For Jesus, obedience meant death on the Cross (8).
 - b. What does obeying God mean for you today (Luke 9:23)?
 3. Jesus was exalted by God (9-11).
 - a. God exalted Jesus through the resurrection (9).
 - b. Are you convinced that Jesus is alive today (Acts. 1:1-3)?
 4. Jesus will be acknowledged by everyone (10-11).
 - a. Do you acknowledge him (Matt. 10:32-33)?

Challenge If Jesus is alive in your life, you'll live like he did.

The Image of God

COLOSSIANS 1:15-23

Key Thought It's vital to know some "basics" about who Jesus really is.

Overview The book of Colossians was written by the Apostle Paul to counteract the impact some false teachers were having on the new believers in Colossae. To correct the problem, Paul offers a concentrated description of Jesus. His main point is that Jesus is God and he is woven into the fabric of all creation. Paul then presents two new insights: first, Jesus is the head of the church. Second, Jesus is the key to the Good News.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus is God. (15, 19; 2:9).
 - a. He is the creator of all (16; (John 1:1-3).
 - b. He is the complete "image" of God (15).
 - c. He holds all things together by his divine power (17).
 2. Jesus is Head of the Church (18).
 - a. The church is his body; he's the head (18; Eph. 1:22-23).
 3. Jesus is the Key to the Good News (20-23)!
 - a. His death on the cross reconciles us to God (20, 22).
 - b. He presents us holy to God, free of accusation. (22).

Challenge Who do you believe Jesus is?

Superior to All

HEBREWS 1:1-4

Key Thought In Jesus, God shows us what he's really like.

Overview The book of Hebrews covers all kinds of issues that were important to the first Jewish Christians, as well as to us. But it starts with an important fact: God has always wanted people to know who he is, and he's been saying so for centuries. But in Jesus, God goes even further. He shows up himself and says, "Look! This is who I am."

- Sermon Outline**
1. God wants us to know what he's like (1-2).
 - a. He's been saying so for centuries in many different ways (1; Rom. 1:19-20).
 2. God show us what he is like in Jesus.
 - a. Jesus is the "exact representation" of God (3).
 - b. Jesus is the "radiance of God's glory" (3; John 8:54).
 - c. The "fullness" of God is in Jesus (Col. 1:19).
 3. God is glorified when we acknowledge Jesus.
 - a. That's the only proper response (Phil. 2:9-11).

Challenge How will you respond to what you know about God?

The Cornerstone


1 PETER 2:4-10

Key Thought When the Bible says “church,” it doesn’t mean a building.

Overview In this passage, the Apostle Peter presents another important truth about Jesus: saying “yes” to him makes one part of his body, the Church. And to describe the Church, Peter uses a picture of bricks and mortar, but gives it a new and much deeper spiritual meaning. It’s not a building; it’s a people, people with a particular privilege and calling.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Church is not primarily a building.
 - a. It’s a “spiritual house” that Jesus is making (4, 5).
 2. Followers of Jesus are the building material of the Church.
 - a. “Living Stones” make up the church (5).
 3. Jesus is the Cornerstone of the church (6-8).
 - a. He’s a living stone present with his people (4).
 - b. His followers are built together and connected in him (5).
 - c. He is a stumbling block to others (4, 7-8).
 4. The Church has a particular privilege and calling (9-10).
 - a. Privileged to be “a holy nation,” “a people belonging to God” (9).
 - b. Called to declare Christ’s praises (9).
 - c. The people of God, recipients of his mercy (10).

Challenge Let Jesus make you a “living stone” in his church.



OLD TESTAMENT

Sermon Outlines

The First Sin

GENESIS 3:1-24

Key Thought Sin lives within each of us, bringing terrible consequences.

Overview What is sin? We tend to think sin is some obviously evil act, like murdering or stealing, and of course, that's part of it. But the full picture is more subtle and dangerous. In this passage, the serpent simply questions God's authority and contradicts God's word. Honest questions and even doubts can help us grow in our faith. But questioning God's authority or living in contradiction to what he says in the Bible is a different matter. That is sin.

- Sermon Outline**
1. What is sin? The Serpent Demonstrates! (1-4).
 - a. By questioning God's authority (1).
 - b. By contradicting/disobeying God's Word (4).
 2. Why does a person sin? God's Law Reveals!
 - a. Sin lives in us (Rom. 7:20).
 - b. God's Law shows our sinful nature (Rom. 7:7-9).
 3. What is the result of Sin? It's all too clear! (7-24).
 - a. Sin brings shame (7) and fear (10) towards God.
 - b. Sin brings pain (16) and death (19) (Rom. 6:23).
 - c. Sin brings alienation from God (23-24).
 4. We need a Savior from sin! That Savior is Jesus!
 - a. That is why he came (John 3:16-18).

Challenge Own your sin and own your Savior.

A Rebellious People

EXODUS 32:1—33:6

Key Thought We all can influence the spiritual lives of others—for good or ill.

Overview All of us, like Moses and Aaron, are spiritual leaders, even if we aren't ordained or aren't particularly religious. Our actions influence the moral decisions of others, for good or for ill. In this passage, we see two contrasting ways that Moses and Aaron influenced the people of Israel. Aaron gave the people what they wanted—an idol to be their god. Moses gave them what they needed—a reminder of their terrible, stupid sin.

- Sermon Outline**
1. All of us are spiritual leaders to someone.
 - a. We all influence others to follow or disregard God.
 - b. Our influence can have serious impacts—for good or ill.
 2. Aaron's spiritual leadership for ill. (32:1-9).
 - a. He gave in to pressure and led them astray (32:1-5).
 - b. His actions had a serious impact (32:9).
 3. Moses' stand against his people's sin (32:19-32).
 - a. He rebukes their idolatry (32:19-20).
 - b. He rebukes their sin and intercedes with God (32:30-32).
 4. We, too, can lead others to follow God's ways.
 - a. Andrew brings Simon Peter to Jesus (John 1:40-42).
 - b. The influence of the Samaritan Woman (John 4:39).
 - c. Who can you influence to lead to Christ?

Challenge Be a spiritual leader. Lead someone to Christ.

No One Does Good

PSALM 14:1-7

Key Thought It's foolish to deny it; sin infects and affects us all.

Overview Sin doesn't only affect the "bad guys," those who deny God (1) and aggressively pursue an evil agenda (4). David says sin affects us all—the "good guys," too. And if sin affects everyone, then it's not healthy to deny it or its hold on us. But although God hates sin, he wants us to have a deep and close relationship with him. For that we need a savior. David prayed for one and God answered centuries later when he sent his son, Jesus, to take away our sin.

- Sermon Outline**
1. All of us sin (3).
 - a. We all fall short of God's standards (Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6).
 - b. It's foolish to assume otherwise (1 John 1:8).
 2. Only a fool assumes God doesn't notice or care (2-6).
 - a. God does see our sin (2).
 - b. God acts on behalf of those sinned against (4-6).
 - c. God is present with those who follow him (5).
 3. Sin breaks our relationship with God (Isa. 59:2).
 - a. God "hides his face" from us.
 4. Jesus is God's solution to the "sin problem."
 - a. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross takes away our sin (1 John 2:2; 3:5; 4:10).
 - b. Jesus brings us back to God (1 Tim. 2:5).

Challenge If your relationship with God is broken by sin, let Jesus fix it.

Sin Has Consequences

ISAIAH 59:1-21

Key Thought It's dangerous to take sin and its effects lightly.

Overview Isaiah reminds us again that God is against sin. That means we should be too, for several important reasons. First, sin separates us from God. Second, sin leads to a breakdown of fundamental values. Finally, sin causes a rejection of truth. So it's no surprise that God is against sin. What is surprising is that in spite of our continual rebellion, God has had a plan to save us from it all along. The plan was to send a Redeemer (20)—Jesus Christ—who could restore the broken relationship forever.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Sin leads to a separation from God (2).
 - a. It breaks our relationship and communication with God (2).
 - b. It began with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:23-24) and continues to this day.
 2. Sin leads to the breakdown of fundamental values (8-14).
 - a. It inevitably leads to a breakdown in justice and discerning what is right (8, 14).
 3. Sin leads to a rejection of truth (14, 15).
 - a. Relativism is rampant. "Whatever is true for you."
 - b. We can no longer discern truth (I John 1:8).
 4. God takes sin seriously (20)!
 - a. He had a plan to send a redeemer to save us from the effects of sin (20), Jesus Christ.
 - b. He is the truth and restores truth in and for us (John 14:6).

Challenge Take sin as seriously as God does!

A Call to Repent

AMOS 5:1-27

Key Thought Worship without a just lifestyle is unacceptable to God.

Overview In this passage, God has pretty strong things to say to folks who go through the motions of worship without acknowledging their sin. God was angry because these highly religious people abused the poor in order to live in luxury and deprived innocent people of justice in the courts. It can be frightening to think of God being so angry. But only when we understand the depth of his revulsion for sin can we fully appreciate the height of his love for us in sending his own Son, Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's anger is on those who are unjust (1-13).
 - a. Who reject what is right and good (7).
 - b. Who "trample on the poor" (11).
 2. God's people must "practice what we preach" (18-27).
 - a. Or our worship is unacceptable to God (21-23).
 - b. Or we may risk God's anger (18-20, 27).
 3. Lives that please him are vital to worship that pleases God.
 - a. God calls us to justice and righteousness (24).
 - b. God despises those living in luxury without regard for the poor (11).
 4. God accepts our worship if we seek to live justly (14, 15).
 - a. We are to hate evil, seek good and love justice.
 - b. How does your lifestyle support your worship?

Challenge Worship God not only with your words but with your life.

A Special Celebration

EXODUS 12:1-30

Key Thought Jesus' sacrificial death for us is foreshadowed in the Passover.

Overview Our passage contains two poignant connections to Jesus. The first is the reference to a lamb that was sacrificed to avert God's judgment. The New Testament often described Jesus as a lamb. The Passover lamb was one of the first great previews of God's plan of salvation. A second connection is the use of blood. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb became the essential element that saved the Israelites, so the blood of Jesus shed on the Cross was the essential element that secured salvation for all humankind.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Passover: Old Testament Preview.
 - a. The lamb sacrificed to save (3-6).
 - b. Blood shed to save (7-12).
 2. Jesus: New Testament Fulfillment.
 - a. Jesus, the lamb of God sacrificed (Rev. 5:12; John 1:29).
 - b. His blood shed for us (John 22:20; Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:12).
 3. The Lord's Supper: The New Passover.
 - a. Jesus celebrates the Passover meal (Luke 22:1-14).
 - b. He gives the bread and cup as symbols of his death (Luke 22:19-20).
 - c. Jesus is our great "Passover Lamb," saving us from the wages of sin (Rom. 6:23).

Challenge Let Jesus be your "Passover Lamb" each time you celebrate the Lord's Supper.

God's Provision

EXODUS 16:1-35

Key Thought Jesus offers a true and lasting solution to spiritual hunger.

Overview Embedded in this desert travelogue is another sign pointing to the Savior. In the New Testament, when the religious leaders demanded a miracle, Jesus cited this passage in Exodus as his answer. His main point was that just as Moses provided manna to meet the physical need of people, so he, Jesus, was the “true bread” who satisfied the ultimate need of all people—the need for a restored and eternal relationship with God.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God Provides bread in the desert (2-17).
 - a. People grumble and cry for food (2-3).
 - b. God provides bread from heaven (11-17).
 - c. A temporary “fix;” food spoils, people will hunger and grumble again. (Numbers 21:4-5).
 2. God provides “true bread from heaven” (32).
 - a. People today grumble and look to satisfy spiritual hunger.
 - b. Jesus is the “true bread,” the “bread of life” (John 6:35, 48).
 - c. Jesus offers a lasting “fix;” He satisfies hunger for a relationship with God (John 6:33, 49-51).
 3. God offers us “food” that never spoils.
 - a. Jesus offers eternal life. Unlike food, it never “spoils” (John 6:27).
 - b. We can choose to feed on him (John 6:57-8).

Challenge If you're hungry for a relationship with God, feed on Jesus, the “true bread!”

The Bronze Snake

NUMBERS 21:4-9

Key Thought God delivers us from sin and death today through Jesus.

Overview God's main purpose in send this infestation of snakes was to provide a way for people to be saved. When the Israelites looked at the bronze replica, they were saved from the effects of the poison. Jesus referred to this episode early in his ministry as a way of explaining his mission to a religious leader (John 3:14-15). Just as the bronze snake became the vehicle of the Israelites' salvation, so Jesus' death on the Cross would be the vehicle for the salvation of all people who believe in him.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Disaster in the desert: The sin.
 - a. The people sin by speaking against God and Moses (5).
 - b. God sends the snakes as punishment (6).
 - c. The consequences of sin is death (Rom. 6:23).
 2. Deliverance in the desert: The way.
 - a. The people confessed their sin and sought salvation (7).
 - b. God made a way of salvation with the bronze snake (8).
 - c. All who accepted God's one way of salvation lived (9).
 3. Jesus is our deliverance: God's way.
 - a. Jesus' death on the cross compared to the snake that saved (John 3:14-15).
 - b. If we confess and look to him, we receive salvation from our sins, too (1 John 1:9; Rom. 10:9).
 - c. Don't be fooled by other "salvations" (good life, church attendance, etc).
 - d. Just like the "one way" in the desert, Jesus is the "one way" of salvation today (John 14:6).

Challenge Let Jesus deliver you from the disaster of sin.

The New Temple

1 KINGS 8:1-21

Key Thought Jesus gives us the privilege of free access to God at any time.

Overview This passage describes the “ribbon cutting ceremony” for a magnificent new Temple King Solomon built in Jerusalem. Over the years that followed, the Temple was destroyed and rebuilt, and by the time of Jesus it had become commercialized and more like a strip mall than a place of worship. That’s why Jesus angrily cleaned house in the Temple (John 2:12-17), causing the religious leaders to demand proof of his authority. In so doing he demonstrated how this important Old Testament building had been pointing to him all along.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Meeting with God in Old Testament times: In a building.
 - a. In the Temple where God “resided”: the “Holy of Holies” (Lev. 16:2).
 - b. Separated from everyone by a curtain (Exod. 26:31-34).
 - c. Accessible only by the High Priest once each year (Lev. 16:29-34).
 - d. Temple was corrupted and degraded (John 2:13-14).
 2. Meeting with God today: In a person.
 - a. God “resides” in us, his temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17).
 - b. Jesus tore the “curtain” separating us from access to God (Luke 23:44-5).
 - c. We have direct access to God any time through Jesus, our “Great High Priest” (Heb. 10:19-20).
 3. Meeting with God Now: With clean hearts.
 - a. Jesus, our great high priest, removed our sins once for all (Heb. 7:26-8).
 - b. Just as he cleaned the temple then (John 2:15-16), Jesus “cleans” our hearts and lives today.

Challenge Meet with God through Jesus any time, any place—even now!

One Greater Than Jonah

JONAH 1:1—4:11

Key Thought Jonah's story is a preview of Jesus' saving work.

Overview When the skeptical religious leaders of his day asked for miraculous proof of his authenticity, Jesus referred to this Old Testament book. In essence he was saying the story of Jonah provided all the proof they needed. How? First, Jesus came to die. Just as Jonah was entombed in the great fish for three days, so Jesus would be in the tomb three days after his crucifixion. And second, Jesus would rise again. Just as the great fish gave up Jonah, so the grave would give up Jesus. He is the true Savior!

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus explains his life and death from Jonah's story (Matt. 12:38-45).
 - a. Jesus offers Jonah's story as proof he is the Messiah.
 - b. Note the parallels between the two men.
 2. Jonah: an Old Testament "savior";
 - a. 3 days in the fish (1:17).
 - b. After 3 days, Jonah is "resurrected" (2:10).
 - c. Jonah's obedience to God saves the people of Ninevah (3:10).
 3. Jesus: The true Savior from God.
 - a. 3 days in the tomb (Matt. 16:21, 1 Cor. 15:4).
 - b. Resurrected after 3 days (Acts 2:24).
 - c. His obedience to God saves us (Acts 13:38; Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Cor. 15:4)

Challenge Jesus is the true Savior today. Make him yours.

“You Are My Son”

PSALM 2:1-12

Key Thought The Bible began making the case for Christ long before his birth.

Overview From the perspective of the New Testament, several phrases in this psalm that point to Jesus. The Psalm’s description of a Father’s approval of his Son (7) echoes what God would later say to Jesus. Also, Messiah, the name given to Jesus, means Anointed One, the very phrase used in this Psalm (2). And when the Apostles Peter and John were being persecuted for speaking about Jesus after his resurrection and ascension, they quoted this Psalm (Acts 4:23-31). So centuries before Jesus appeared, the Holy Spirit was already developing a case for Christ.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Long before his birth, the Bible made the case for Christ.
 - a. The psalms and prophetic books were written centuries before Christ.
 - b. Many references “make the case” for Christ (see outlines #19, 21-25).
 2. This psalm is one example of making the case (2-7).
 - a. Reference to the “Anointed One” (Messiah) (2).
 - b. “You are my son” (7).
 3. This psalm points to Jesus.
 - a. Jesus was called the Messiah (“Anointed One”) (2; Matt. 16:16; John 4:25-6).
 - b. God calls Jesus “My Son” (7; Matt. 3:17; Luke 9:35).
 4. The Apostles confirm “the case” in this psalm.
 - a. They quote this psalm referring to Jesus (Acts 4:23-6).

Challenge Have you made “the case for Christ” in your own mind and heart?

Scorned and Suffering

PSALM 22:1-31

Key Thought David shows us how to deal with the pain and troubles of life.

Overview This psalm of David describes the feelings of a man in big, big trouble. One of David's strengths was his ability to communicate his feelings. Another was his reflex for turning to God first when the chips were down. He did this by forcing himself to remember what God had done in the past. That gave him hope and enabled him to trust. He also praised and worshipped God in the middle of the crisis. And we find many details of Jesus' death nearly 1,000 years later echoed in this psalm.

- Sermon Outline**
1. When You Feel like David Felt:
 - a. Alone and abandoned by God (1).
 - b. In physical or mental pain (16).
 - c. Robbed of your dignity (18).
 - d. Mocked and ridiculed (8).
 2. Do what David did.
 - a. Recall God's faithfulness in the past (4).
 - b. Call upon him in prayer (19-21).
 - c. Draw hope and strength from praise and worship (22-31).
 3. Know that God understands what you feel.
 - a. Jesus was robbed of dignity on the Cross (John 19:23-4).
 - b. Jesus was mocked and ridiculed (Luke 23:35-39).
 - c. Jesus was in physical and mental pain (Luke 23:32-33).
 - d. Jesus felt alone and abandoned by God (Mark 15:34).

Challenge Take all your pain and trouble to God. He'll help. He understands.

Hated Without Reason

PSALM 69:1-36

Key Thought Life brings “deep waters” to us all, but there is a way through.

Overview In this Psalm, David is in “deep waters” and is calling out for God’s help. Note how David responded to his overwhelming problem. First, he honestly described the situation to God. Next, he examined his own heart first instead of pointing fingers at others. Finally David makes his request known to God and takes time to praise God. This Psalm was especially meaningful to Jesus, also. He quoted it when explaining why the world hated him and his followers (John 15:25).

- Sermon Outline**
1. David is in big trouble.
 - a. David is a godly person (Acts 13:22).
 - b. So trouble isn’t always the result of sin (John 9:1-3).
 - c. But God can use it to expose sin we can’t or won’t confess (Job 33).
 2. He honestly presents his situation to God.
 - a. He’s surrounded by enemies (4).
 - b. He’s desperate for help (1-3).
 3. He honestly examines his own heart before casting blame. (5; Matthew 7:1-5).
 4. He presents his prayer to God.
 - a. Trusting in God’s love for him (13, 16).
 - b. Calling on God’s mercy (16).
 5. He closes his prayer with praise (30-36).
 - a. Praise builds hope and confidence for the future.

Challenge Don’t drown in life’s “deep waters.” Let God see you through.

A Royal Appointment

PSALM 110:1-7

Key Thought This psalm looks forward to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Overview The New Testament refers to this Psalm more than any other. Why? Although the psalm is built around two statements from God; followed by David's commentary on what God has said, the most significant thing about this psalm is the way it points to the coming Messiah. Jesus affirmed this when he quoted these verses to challenge the religious leaders who doubted he was the Son of God (Matt. 22:41-45). He applied all of the psalm's symbolism to himself. He was saying, in effect, that he was the Messiah, the human/divine Savior of the world.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God speaks about the coming Messiah in this psalm.
 - a. He will be victorious (1).
 - b. He will be an eternal Priest (4).
 2. Jesus applies this psalm to himself.
 - a. He is the victorious, divine "Lord" of this psalm (Matt. 22:41-45).
 3. The Apostle Peter applies this psalm to Jesus.
 - a. He refers to Jesus as the victorious, divine "Lord" of this psalm (Acts 2:34-5).
 4. The writer of Hebrews applies this psalm to Jesus.
 - a. He refers to Jesus' eternal priesthood (Heb. 5:6, 7:11-21).
 5. This psalm points to the coming of Jesus, the Messiah.

Challenge The Bible speaks with one voice throughout: Jesus is the Messiah!

The Stone Rejected

PSALM 118:1-29

Key Thought This psalm celebrates God's great deliverance—past and present.

Overview Originally the psalm commemorated an unspecified victory in Israel's history that produced this unrestrained expression of joy and praise. In the middle of this celebration of God's past deliverance, however, are two references to an even greater deliverance he planned in the future. "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone..." (22) and "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (26). Both point to the greater deliverance whereby God would save the world from sin and offer people a way to have a relationship with him through the Cross..

- Sermon Outline**
1. God delivered his people in the past.
 - a. His people recall his past deliverance (5-13).
 - b. His people respond in praise (14-21).
 2. God delivers his people today.
 - a. Our deliverance is through the "capstone," Jesus (22; Matt. 21:42).
 - b. He is the "blessed one" foretold in this Psalm (16; Matt. 21:9).
 3. God awaits our response to his deliverance.
 - a. Recall God's care for you the past.
 - b. Recall God's deliverance from sin through Jesus.
 - c. Accept God's deliverance in Jesus.
 - d. Give God the praise he is due (1, 29).

Challenge God delivers! Why wait? Let him deliver you now!

The Great Blessing

GENESIS 12:1-9

Key Thought God's redemptive plan began with Abram and was completed by Jesus.

Overview When he told Abram to "leave" everything and "go" to an unknown land, God was putting in motion a plan to reverse the effects of sin and allow humans to have close fellowship with him again. The plan had two components. The first was to create "a great nation" (2) from Abram's family who would eventually become the Israelites. The second was to bless "all the peoples on earth" (3) through these Chosen People. It would take thousands of years and much pain and suffering, but the great blessing was Jesus Christ, the savior of the world.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's call to Abram.
 - a. "Leave" your country (1).
 - b. "Go" where I'll show you (1).
 2. God's plan for Abram.
 - a. To become a great nation (the Israelites) (2).
 - b. To become a blessing to all (3).
 3. God's plan fulfilled in Jesus.
 - a. Jesus, the descendant of Abraham (Matt. 1:1-16).
 - b. Jesus sent to fulfill God's redemptive plan (Gal. 4:4).
 4. God's call and plan for you.
 - a. "Leave" your old life and "Go" with Jesus (Mark 1:17).
 - b. Be a blessing to all those around you.

Challenge Leave your old life behind and go with Jesus!

The Righteous Branch

JEREMIAH 23:1-9

Key Thought God promised to send his people a “Good Shepherd,” Jesus.

Overview Jeremiah was sent to denounce Israel’s sin and turn them back to God. The religious leaders (“shepherds”) especially felt the heat of Jeremiah’s prophecy. They were involved in idolatry, injustice and immorality instead of truly caring for the people. But the tragic impact of these bad shepherds highlighted the need for a savior, the Good Shepherd (John 10:11-18). Jeremiah also tells us that the Savior God was preparing to send would not only be a descendent of David but also a righteous Branch (5) and The Lord Our Righteousness (6).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jeremiah’s dire message (1-2).
 - a. The “shepherds” of God’s people led them astray (1-2, 10:21).
 - b. The “shepherds of God’s people didn’t give them proper care (2).
 2. God’s great promise (3-6).
 - a. God himself will be their shepherd (3).
 - b. He will send a “righteous branch” (5).
 - c. He will be called “The Lord Our Righteousness” (6).
 3. Jesus keeps God’s promise.
 - a. He is the “Good Shepherd” (John 10:11-18).
 - b. He is Our Righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30).
 - c. We can follow and trust his leading (John 8:12).

Challenge Follow the “Good Shepherd.” He’ll never lead you astray.

The Shepherd from Bethlehem

MICAH 5:1-5

Key Thought Jesus is the Savior that the prophet Micah foretold.

Overview In just these few verses from Micah's book we learn important details about the coming Savior, all of which were fulfilled by Jesus. 1) His origins. The Savior would come from the little town of Bethlehem 2) His character. Micah says that the Savior's strength and majesty won't be based on human ability but on "the name of the Lord his God." And the Savior won't just achieve a time of peace, "he will be their peace." Micah's prophecy was surely about Jesus Christ who made peace with God by his death on the Cross.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Micah foretells a Savior: his origins.
 - a. He will be born in Bethlehem (2).
 - b. His origins are "from of old" (2).
 2. Micah foretells a Savior: his character.
 - a. He will be a shepherd (4).
 - b. He will depend on "the name of the Lord his God," not himself (4).
 - c. He will be our peace (5).
 3. Jesus is the one Micah foretold.
 - a. He was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:1-7).
 - b. He is our peace (Acts 10:36; Eph. 2:14; Col. 1:20).
 - c. He is the eternal God "from old" (John 1:1-2).
 - d. He is our "Good Shepherd" (John 10:1-11).
 - e. He carries out the will of the Father (John 4:34, 5:19-20).

Challenge Let Jesus be your Savior and your "peace"!

The Humble King

ZECHARIAH 9:9-17

Key Thought Jesus was the Savior King that God promised through Zechariah.

Overview In chapters 1-8, Zechariah encourages the people to continue rebuilding the Temple and to avoid the sins of the past. In chapters 9-14, he looks forward to the coming of a very special king. This king would be humble, not proud or arrogant. He would establish genuine peace throughout the world, not just the protection of Israel. And finally, he would institute a new kind of freedom, one based on “the blood of my covenant with you” (11). It’s not hard to see how these prophecies were later fulfilled in Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Zechariah foretells a new kind of King.
 - a. Kings are often arrogant. (1 Kings 20:1-3). This one will be humble (9).
 - b. Kings are often warriors (2 Samuel 3:1). This one will bring peace (10).
 - c. Kings often deny freedom. This one will establish freedom (11).
 2. Jesus is that new kind of King.
 - a. He is a humble King (Matt. 11:29, 21:1-11; John 13:1-17).
 - b. He is a King who brings peace (Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:4).
 - c. He brings freedom to all who believe (Luke 4:14-21; John 8:31-2; 2 Cor. 3:17).
 3. Bow to the king and receive his gifts.
 - a. In Christ, you are a “new creation” (2 Cor. 5:17).
 - b. You have the peace and freedom Christ brings.
 - c. You’ll want to live humbly as a servant as Jesus did (Phil. 2:1-11; 1 John 2:6; Luke 9:23).

Challenge Live humbly with a servant heart like Jesus.

The Pierced One

ZECHARIAH 12:1—13:9

Key Thought Zechariah's prophecy has important clues to Jesus' future ministry.

Overview The prophetic books often contain clues or references to significant events in the future. This passage contains several of those "future clues." One is Zechariah's reference to "the one they have pierced" (13:10). In his gospel account, John linked this verse to Jesus' death on the Cross. Another "future clue" is found in the poem about the shepherd and the sheep, a familiar biblical theme as we've seen. Jesus quoted this very passage to predict how Peter and the rest of the disciples would desert him at his arrest.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Prophetic books often speak to God's future actions, as well as the present.
 2. Zechariah gives "clues" to God's future actions.
 - a. "The One who was pierced" (12:10).
 - b. "And the sheep will be scattered" (13:7).
 3. These "clues" point forward to Jesus.
 - a. To Jesus who was pierced (John 19:36-7).
 - b. To Jesus' words (Matt. 26:31-35).
 4. These clues were accurate.
 - a. Because they were "The Word of The Lord" (12:1).
 - b. Because God's Word is True (Isa. 55:11; Luke 21:33).

Challenge Follow God's "clues" and they lead you right to Jesus.

God with Us

ISAIAH 7:1-25

Key Thought Jesus is Isaiah's "Immanuel," our deliverer from sin and fear.

Overview This passage contains one of the most well-known prophecies about the coming Messiah in the entire Old Testament. Isaiah says that a virgin will give birth to a son who will be called Immanuel, which literally means "God with us." This prophecy was sign to King Ahaz that God would deliver Judah from her enemies. But it also predicted God's greatest deliverance in sending his son, Jesus Christ, to deliver all people from sin. The great miracle is that because Jesus came, God is with us forever.

- Sermon Outline**
1. King Ahaz's dilemma.
 - a. His nation is under attack (1-2).
 - b. He and his people are terrified (2).
 2. God's answer: A promise of deliverance.
 - a. No need to fear. It won't happen (4-7).
 - b. Trust me—or fail (9).
 - c. A sign to confirm his deliverance--Immanuel (14).
 3. Our dilemma.
 - a. We're under attack by sin (Rom. 6:8-12).
 - b. We're threatened with death (Rom. 6:11, 23).
 4. God's answer: A promised deliverer.
 - a. No need to fear (1 John 4:16b-18).
 - b. Immanuel—God is with us in Jesus (Matt. 1:18-25).
 - c. He is our deliverance (Rom. 7:7-25).

Challenge Throw away your fear. God is with us in Jesus!

A Special Child

ISAIAH 9:1-8

Key Thought God promised a wonderful future to Judah and to us!

Overview In spite of Judah's sin and all her troubles, God was planning a future that would be wonderful in at least three ways: Light. God would turn the darkness into light (2) by their eventual deliverance from the Assyrian invasion. Joy. This deliverance would lead to unrestrained joy (3). The Coming Messiah. This future would culminate in the birth of one who would become a unique leader (6-7), the promised Messiah. This prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus Christ who delivered us from the darkness of sin and established an everlasting kingdom for those who trust him.

- Sermon Outline**
1. He'll take away their "gloom and doom" (1).
 - a. He gives us hope and encouragement in Jesus (Heb. 6:17-20).
 - b. He comforts us in all our troubles (2 Cor. 1:3-4).
 - c. He works all things for our good (Rom. 8:28).
 2. He'll turn their darkness to light (2).
 - a. He is the "Light of the World" (John 8:12).
 - b. He leads us out of darkness in to the light. (1 Pet. 2:9).
 3. He'll give them great joy (3).
 - a. Jesus completes our joy (John 15:11, 16:24).
 - b. God fills us with joy in Jesus (Rom. 14:17, 15:13).
 - c. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).
 4. He'll send the Messiah (6-7).
 - a. Jesus is that Messiah (John 4:25-26; Matt. 16:16).

Challenge Forget the gloom and doom! Let Jesus replace it with light and joy!

The Chosen One

ISAIAH 42:1-9

Key Thought Jesus, the Servant of God, brings salvation and justice to the earth.

Overview This is the first of four “Servant Songs” in the book of Isaiah. His prophesy no doubt concerned the nation of Israel, but God used it to also communicate about the coming Messiah. He has been chosen by God (1). Isaiah prophesied that one day a Savior would come who would be uniquely chosen by God. He is God’s instrument of salvation (6). Isaiah says that the servant would be filled with the Spirit of God and would establish justice for all, including the weak and downtrodden. Jesus said that he was the fulfillment of this passage.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Isaiah’s prophecy: a servant is to come.
 - a. He’ll be chosen by God (1).
 - b. He’ll be God’s instrument of salvation (6).
 - c. He’ll establish justice for all (3-4).
 2. God’s fulfillment: the coming of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus was chosen by God (Matt. 3:16-17; Luke 9:35)
 - b. Jesus is God’s instrument of salvation (John 1:29).
 - c. Jesus establishes justice for all (Luke 4:18-19; Matt. 11:5; 1 Cor. 1:30).
 3. The Bible’s affirmation: Jesus is the one foretold by Isaiah.
 - a. Matthew’s gospel affirms it (Matt. 12:15-21).

Challenge How can you be God’s instrument of justice today?

The Suffering Servant

ISAIAH 52:13—53:12

Key Thought Jesus is the “Suffering Servant” who died for our sins.

Overview Here, Isaiah introduces us to the “suffering servant” and gives us a detailed picture of what Jesus would experience on the Cross. The first and most obvious detail is that he would have to suffer (53:3, 7, 10). The second is that the servant’s suffering would pay for the sins of others (53:5-6, 12b). That’s exactly what Jesus did on the Cross. Finally, Isaiah predicts that the suffering servant would eventually be restored and glorified (53:11-12a), which is what happened when God brought Jesus back to life in his resurrection.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Servant: familiar with sorrow, suffering (53:3, 7, 10).
 - a. Despised and rejected (53:3).
 - b. Punished, wounded, pierced (53:5).
 - c. Caused to suffer (53:10).
 - d. Restored and Glorified (53:11-12a).
 2. Jesus: familiar with sorrow and suffering.
 - a. Mocked and ridiculed (Matt. 27:27-31, 39-40; Luke 22:63).
 - b. Crucified, wounded, pierced (John 19:18-37).
 - c. Caused to suffer (Mark 15:33).
 - d. Resurrected and glorified (Luke 24:1-8; Acts 1:1-8; 1 Pet. 1:21).
 3. The Apostles affirm Jesus, the suffering servant.
 - a. Peter quotes and echoes Isaiah’s prophecy (1 Pet. 2:21-25).

Challenge How will you treat this one who suffered for you?

Bringing Good News!

ISAIAH 61:1-11

Key Thought Jesus was on a very important mission from God.

Overview This passage underscores two aspects of God character. First, he is a God of hope. Regardless of what messes we make of our lives, with God we can have a fresh start and a new future. God is always at work for our good (Romans 8:28, Jeremiah 29:11-13) as he was for the Israelites. A second aspect of God's character is that he passionately loves justice and hates sin (8). Note that this passage had special significance for Jesus; he used it as the mission statement for his life on earth.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God is a God of "Good News" (1, 2, 7).
 - a. For all who suffer, mourn or are oppressed (1, 2).
 - b. He gives us salvation and righteousness (10, Rom. 3:21-25).
 - c. He has a good plan for us (Jer. 29:11-13).
 2. God loves justice and hates sin (8).
 - a. God passionately loves justice (Psa. 11:7; Isa. 58:6; Psa. 82:3-4).
 - b. God passionately hates sin (Psa. 45:6-7; Heb. 1:8-9; Rom. 6:23).
 3. Jesus' mission from God:
 - a. To bring Good News (Luke 4:18-19).
 - b. To take away sin (1 John 3:4-10; John 1:29).
 - c. That God might be both just and justifier (Rom. 3:24-26).

Challenge Be as passionate for justice and against sin as God is!

NEW TESTAMENT

Sermon Outlines

Mary's Son

LUKE 1:26—56

Key Thought Mary is an example of how to please God.

Overview Mary is one of the great heroes of the Bible. But how, can we, like her, find favor with God? First, notice that she is confident in her relationship to God. She sees herself simply as “the Lord’s servant” (38). Second, notice her willingness to live by faith (38, 45). Finally, notice her heart for God (46-55). Mary’s song (often called the Magnificat) is filled with Old Testament imagery and indicates that she was a young woman who had spent time reflecting on the Scriptures.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Mary was confident in her relationship with God.
 - a. She humbly called herself the Lord’s Servant (38).
 - b. We can be confident in our relationship with God (Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 5:1-2; Col. 2:13-14).
 2. Mary was willing to follow in faith.
 - a. She willingly accepted in faith the task God gave her (38, 45).
 - b. We must believe and act in faith (Jas. 1:22-25; Luke 6:46; Heb.11).
 3. Mary had a heart for God and knew his Word.
 - a. Mary praised the Lord and clearly was familiar with his Word (46-55).
 - b. Seeking God and following his word pleases God (1Thess. 4:1; Heb. 11:6).

Challenge Let Mary’s example help you grow closer to God.

Joseph's Dream

MATTHEW 1:18-25

Key Thought Jesus' birth was planned and prepared by God long in advance.

Overview Matthew began his gospel with a genealogy (1:1-17), not exactly a page-turner. But we shouldn't dismiss Matthew's perspective for its lack of dramatic flair. That's because he understood the most important thing: Jesus was born to save people from their sins (21). Another fact people struggle with today is the idea of the virgin birth. Even Mary and Joseph had trouble grasping what was happening (Luke 1:34; 19). But perhaps the biggest fact that emerges from Matthew's report is that the birth of Jesus was no accident. It was all God's doing.

- Sermon Outline**
1. It was an amazing birth!
 - a. A virgin birth (18).
 - b. Conceived by the Holy Spirit (20).
 2. It was a troubling birth!
 - a. Joseph almost divorced Mary for adultery (19).
 - b. Mary was confused about it (Luke 1:34).
 3. It was a purposeful birth!
 - a. To save us from our sin (21).
 4. It was an intentional birth!
 - a. It was no "accident." Predicted long before (22-23).
 - b. It was announced in advance (Luke 1:26-38).

Challenge It's a fact: Jesus' birth was all God's doing!

Born in a Manger

LUKE 2:1-40

Key Thought We should respond to the Good News of Jesus as the shepherds did.

Overview The most overlooked characters in this passage are the lowly shepherds. But it's how they responded to the good news that's instructive to us today. Note that the shepherds weren't too busy to investigate the claims about Jesus (15); they instinctively realized that finding Jesus was important so they made it a priority (16). Next, they didn't consider the truth about Jesus "a private thing." Instead, they immediately began telling others what they had discovered (17) and were unashamed to enthusiastically worship God (20). Those are the marks of Jesus' true followers.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Shepherds decided to "check out" Jesus.
 - a. They went to see if what God had said was true (15).
 - b. God invites us to "check him out" today (Matt. 11:29; Psa. 34:8).
 2. They searched for Jesus until they found him.
 - a. They hurried off to where the baby was (16).
 - b. Now is the time to look for Jesus and find him (Deut. 24:9; 2 Cor. 6:2).
 3. They shared the "Good News" with others.
 - a. The Shepherds "spread the word" about Jesus (17).
 - b. Jesus calls us to "go and tell" (Matt. 28:18-20).
 4. They worshipped God enthusiastically.
 - a. They praised and glorified God for all they'd heard and seen (20).
 - b. Ours should be the very same reaction to such truly "Good News."

Challenge Follow the Shepherd's lead as you respond to the "Good News."

Visit of the Magi

MATTHEW 2:1-23

Key Thought God sometimes works in strange ways to fulfill his good purposes.

Overview One feature of this passage is the odyssey of Joseph and Mary. Their boy was the promised Messiah. So it would be natural for them to think that life would be safe and secure. But God's plan was to make them refugees. We can be sure, however, that no matter where he leads, God has a purpose in mind (Romans 8:28). In this case, he was protecting this special family and fulfilling the plan he had announced centuries earlier. God always knows what he is doing in our lives, even when his plan isn't clear.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's strange work in the lives of Mary and Joseph.
 - a. Herod wants to kill their child (1-12, 20).
 - b. God makes them refugees (13-15).
 2. God's strange plan for Mary and Joseph.
 - a. As refugees, they're protected from Herod (19-20).
 - b. Fleeing to Nazareth is fulfillment of God's plan (23).
 3. God's strange work in our lives.
 - a. Suffering can bring growth in faith (Jas, 1:2-4).
 - b. Troubles can bring growth in ministry (1 Cor.1:3-5).
 4. We can trust God's strange work.
 - a. He'll use it for our good (Rom. 8:28-37).
 - b. He has a good plan for us (Jer. 29:11).

Challenge When God's ways seem "strange," trust him just the same!

“My Father’s House”

LUKE 2:41-52

Key Thought Jesus was a child, but what a special child he was!

Overview As we see in this passage, Jesus possessed wisdom far beyond his years (47). And notice how Jesus reacts to Mary’s reference to “your father” (48). He responds, “Didn’t you know that I had to be in my Father’s house?” Jesus already understood that he was the divine Son of God. The interchange between Mary and Jesus also introduces us to a tension that builds throughout the Gospels. Jesus often said things that assumed his divine nature. Though some people were confused by what he said, others clearly understood him and became angry or rejected him for it.

- Sermon Outline**
1. He was wise beyond his years.
 - a. He was a pre-teen interested in adult theology (46).
 - b. He amazed everyone who heard him (47).
 2. He was conscious of his unique identity.
 - a. He knew exactly who his father was (49).
 3. He overcame the temptations of youth!
 - a. He was obedient to his parents (51).
 4. He grew as God intended.
 - a. In wisdom and favor with God (52).
 - b. In preparation for his adult life and ministry.

Challenge What do you find most attractive or puzzling about the boy Jesus?

Preparing the Way

MATTHEW 3:1-17

Key Thought As odd as John the Baptist seemed, his message was welcome.

Overview John the Baptist was a weird dresser and had strange ideas about food (4). But he had a unique twofold message that people were hungry to hear. Repent! John told people they were sinners, and he told them what to do about it (8). You wouldn't think that would be such a popular theme. But to people weighed down by sin, a call to repentance is a blessing. The kingdom of God is near! The second part of John's message had to do with Jesus; that's what he meant by saying "the kingdom of God is near."

- Sermon Outline**
1. An odd but successful preacher.
 - a. His harsh language probably offended people (7-10).
 - b. His dress and food were highly unconventional (4).
 - c. Yet he was very successful (5).
 2. Because He Had a Vital Message.
 - a. Repent! (2).
 - b. A welcome message to those loaded with guilt (Psa. 32:1-5).
 - c. The Kingdom of God is near (2).
 - d. Jesus, The Messiah, has come (11-12).
 3. A Message Affirmed by God.
 - a. The Dove descended and God spoke (16-17).

Challenge How do you respond to this odd preacher's message?

Temptation in the Desert

LUKE 4:1-13

Key Thought Scripture is a powerful tool to resist powerful temptations.

Overview In this passage, the devil attempts to destroy Jesus in three ways: The promise of granting physical desires. The devil was trying to use Jesus' hunger to make him forget who he really was. The promise of worldly power. "If you worship me, it will all be yours." The promise of spiritual power. The devil returns to his original taunt (3, 9) but attaches it to a quote from Psalm 92. Perhaps spiritual temptations are the most subtle and dangerous. In each case Jesus used his knowledge of the Scriptures to repel the devil's attack.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Temptations come in various ways.
 - a. Through physical desires (Jesus' hunger) (3).
 - i. Legitimate desires taken to an extreme lead to sin.
 - b. Through Pursuing Worldly Power or Success (5-6).
 - i. Note Satan claims that these are his to bestow (6).
 - c. Through Seeking Spiritual Power (9-10).
 - i. Perhaps the most subtle and dangerous of all.
 - ii. We must do God's work in God's way.
 2. Jesus uses Scripture to resist temptation.
 - a. Knowing and using Scripture (4, 8, 12).
 - b. Jesus quoted Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:13, Psalm 91:11-12.
 3. Learn from Jesus' example.
 - a. Read, study and know Scripture.
 - b. Know it well enough to resist Satan's "Scripture twisting" (10-11).
 - c. Use it to rebuke the tempter, as Jesus did.

Challenge Arm yourself against temptation with the power of God's Word.

A Prophet Without Honor

LUKE 4:14-30

Key Thought Jesus made claims about himself to which we must respond.

Overview When Jesus read from the book of Isaiah, he was indicating at least two important things about himself. The first was that he had a specific mission: “to preach good news to the poor...” (17-19), people either spiritually or physically poor. Second, by saying this scripture had been fulfilled (21), Jesus was claiming he was that promised Messiah. Ever since, people have been divided about Jesus. Some accept him (22) while others are infuriated by him (28). A person who said what Jesus said and did what Jesus did demands a response.

- Sermon Outline**
1. A man with a mission.
 - a. To preach good news to the poor (17-19).
 - b. “Poor” can mean either spiritually or physically poor (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20).
 2. A man—and more.
 - a. He claimed to fulfill Isaiah’s prophecy (61:1-2) of the Messiah (21).
 3. A man who demands a response.
 - a. Some accepted him (22).
 - b. Some rejected him (28).
 - c. All must decide about him (Matt. 16:15).

Challenge Make up your mind. Who do you say that Jesus is?

Power and Authority

LUKE 4:31-44

Key Thought Jesus drew great strength from his relationship with the Father.

Overview This passage shows Jesus going public with his ministry. He's starting to travel and attract crowds (31, 43-44). And as he does, the distinctive feature that is evident to all is his authority. We see it both in his preaching (32) and in his healing (36). Our passage gives us one other clue about the source of Jesus' authority, "At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place" (42). In the hustle and bustle of his ministry, Jesus made time to be alone with God in prayer. That's a source of strength that's still available to us today.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus' authority and power exhibited.
 - a. In his teaching (32).
 - b. In his healing (36).
 2. Jesus' authority and power maintained.
 - a. Through communion with God (42; Mark 1:35).
 - b. In the midst of a demanding ministry (40-42).
 3. We have access to that same power.
 - a. Through a regular time in communion with God (Bible and prayer).
 - b. Make it a priority as Jesus did.

Challenge Meet with God daily and tap into the power!

A New Kind of Fishing

LUKE 5:1-11

Key Thought Jesus shows us simple ways to win him followers.

Overview In this passage, we see how the world's greatest leader recruited followers. The first thing we notice is that the crowds were attracted to Jesus not because he was a showman, but rather because he was sharing "the word of God" (1). The next thing we notice is how Jesus recruited followers one at a time as Peter's experience shows us (4-11). It's interesting that his first thought was of his sin. A real encounter with God reveals the distance between God's holiness and our corruption. Even so, we have nothing to fear (10).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Share the word of God.
 - a. People are eager for a word from God (1).
 - b. This is key to church growth.
 2. Speak in language people understand.
 - a. Jesus spoke to Peter in the language of fishing (10).
 - b. Help people see Jesus in the midst of everyday life.
 3. Don't be afraid to be unpopular now and then.
 - a. Jesus didn't tailor his message to what people wanted; He gave what they needed. (Luke 18:22; John 21:19).
 4. Invite people to follow Jesus (Matt. 9:9; Mark 1:17).
 - a. Assure them of his love and forgiveness; they have nothing to fear (10).

Challenge How can you win followers for Jesus where you live and work?

“But I Tell You...”

MATTHEW 5:1-48

Key Thought In The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us what “Kingdom” living looks like.

Overview A careful look at the Sermon on the Mount reveals that Jesus preached about a large and challenging topic: the Kingdom of Heaven. What exactly is it? It will involve two realities. First, those who belong to the Kingdom of Heaven have a heart that is committed to the values that are important to God (3-10). Second, note how Jesus repeats the phrase, “You have heard that it was said...” (21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43). In essence he’s saying, “It’s not good enough to do the right thing; you need to do it for the right reason.”

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Kingdom brings a new way of living.
 - a. Its people are humble, meek, righteous, pure, etc. (3-10).
 - b. Such lives stand out as “salt and light” in our world today (13-16).
 2. It brings a new motivation.
 - a. “You have heard it said...” “But I say...” (21, 27, 31, 33, 38, 43)
 - b. Doing the right thing for the right reasons (not just legalism).
 3. It brings challenges and rewards.
 - a. Expect some form of persecution (11).
 - b. The faithful are promised a reward (12).

Challenge Bring a bit of “heaven” to earth through “kingdom living”!

God's Priorities

MATTHEW 6:1-34

Key Thought Jesus teaches about some common spiritual disciplines.

Overview In this passage, Jesus discusses three spiritual disciplines that you would expect him to cover. About giving (1-4) he says it shouldn't be done for PR value; rather, we should keep a low profile. About prayer (5-15), he says the focus should be spending time alone with God. And about fasting (16-18) he says we shouldn't act like holier-than-thou martyrs.

Jesus concludes with two unexpected topics: money (19-24) and worry (25-34). Finally, he points to the greatest spiritual discipline of all: seek first his kingdom and his righteousness (33). That puts everything else into its proper perspective.

- Sermon Outline**
1. They must be done for the right motives.
 - a. To please God, not gather attention or praise (4, 6, 17-18, 24).
 - i. Giving to the needy (1-4; Matt. 25:13-46).
 - ii. Praying (5-12).
 - iii. Fasting (16-18)
 - iv. Mastering our Money (19-24; 2 Cor. 8:7).
 - v. Committing our cares to God (28-34; 1 Pet. 5:7).
 2. It's assumed we will practice some.
 - a. "And when you..." "Do not..." (2, 5, 16, 19, 25).
 - b. Which are you practicing? How and why?
 3. Keep them in perspective.
 - a. Seek Jesus and his way first and foremost. That's most important (33).
 - b. They're a means to an end—not an end themselves.

Challenge Ask yourself: What or who are you "seeking first"?

Cautions and Concerns

MATTHEW 7:1-29

Key Thought The secret to a life that lasts is hearing and obeying God's Word.

Overview Jesus broke all the rules for effective communicators. The Sermon on the Mount was long (way more than the average attention span of 15 minutes), delivered outside (without a sound system) and included no jokes (or even a funny story). After teaching about the dangers of judging others, the need to proactively seek God, and to watch out for false prophets, Jesus wraps up the world's greatest sermon with a straightforward analogy about houses built on sand and rock. The point? Build your life on the rock-solid words of Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Storms come to every life—even those of believers.
 - a. The man born blind (John 9:1-2).
 - b. Job (ch.1, 2).
 - c. People you know.
 2. Lacking a sure foundation, you lose everything in the storm (27).
 - a. Straying from God's Word can be dangerous (1 Sam. 13:1-15).
 - b. Straying from God's Word can be deadly (Acts 5:1-11).
 3. Built Your Life on the Foundation of God's Word (24).
 - a. Hearing AND doing God's Word is key (24; Jas. 1:22-25).
 - b. Such a life will outlast the storms and be blessed (Jas. 1:25).

Challenge What foundation are you building your life on?

Woe to Hypocrites!

MATTHEW 23:1-39

Key Thought A life that pleases God must avoid hypocrisy.

Overview In this passage, Jesus is clearly “ticked off.” What did it? It all boils down to a single word: hypocrisy. The teachers of the Law and Pharisees weren’t practicing what they preached (3). They thought they were holy, but true holiness doesn’t come from a fancy religious title or from “acting like a saint.” There are many things we can do to appear holy, but that’s all it is, appearances. True holiness requires a complete harmony between God’s priorities and our actions (23).

- Sermon Outline**
1. We “practice what we preach” (3).
 - a. Avoid hypocrisy (see the example of the Pharisees, 16, 17, 28, 33).
 - b. Don’t try to fool God (25-28; 1 Sam. 16:7).
 2. We “do the right thing.”
 - a. We obey God’s commands (John 14:15).
 - b. We align our actions with God’s priorities (23).
 3. We have the right motives.
 - a. Jesus knew the Pharisee’s motives (Matt. 12:14, 15:3-9).
 - b. He knows ours and is pleased with those who want to please him.

Challenge Don’t be a hypocrite. Practice what you preach!

Watching for The End

MATTHEW 24:1-51

Key Thought We can't know when Jesus will come so we must always be ready.

Overview One of the things Jesus does in this passage is predict the end of the world (15-51). He says it will be a time of great stress and worldwide tumult; some say it has begun to happen today. But the followers of Christ have nothing to fear because regardless of what happens or when it does, the most important thing is that Jesus will one day return. Jesus was saying that we should be ready, watching and waiting for that day (44).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The day is known only to God (36).
 - a. Therefore it can't be accurately predicted.
 - b. Therefore we need to always be watchful (42).
 2. The day will be unexpected (44, 50).
 - a. Life will be going on normally (37).
 3. There will be a reckoning (45-51).
 - a. There will be rewards for the faithful (46-7).
 - b. There will be judgment for the unfaithful (51).
 4. It's wise to "keep watch" (42).
 - a. Stay faithful (45-51).
 - b. Stay alert, be careful (Luke 21:34-6).

Challenge Don't let Jesus catch you by surprise! Be prepared for his return.

A True Neighbor

LUKE 10:25-37

Key Thought Helping those in need around us is pleasing to God.

Overview Jesus' goal in this parable was to show us what God is like and how to please him. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, the Levite and the priest failed to do what the Scriptures taught or what God wanted. On the other hand, the Samaritan, the mixed race outcast of that time, obeyed the Scriptures and pleased God. The point is that if you want to know God you need to be like God, who was willing to go out of his way at a significant cost to help us when we were helpless in our sin.

- Sermon Outline**
1. It's not enough to know the Bible.
 - a. The Levite and Priest knew the Bible (27).
 - b. We must act on what we know (Luke 6:46; Jas. 1:22).
 2. There are many excuses but no excuse.
 - a. "I don't have time right now."
 - b. "I don't want to get involved" (Priest might be come "unclean," 31).
 - c. "What difference will it make?" (The Levite may have thought the man was dead, 32).
 3. Fulfilling the Law means loving our neighbor (37).
 - a. Loving our neighbor means helping anyone in need whom we can help.
 - b. Loving our neighbor means taking the appropriate action (33-4).
 - c. Loving our neighbor means bearing the cost (35-6).

Challenge Who is the "neighbor" to whom you can show God's love?

Rich Toward God

LUKE 12:13-21

Key Thought There are healthy and unhealthy ways of being “rich.”

Overview This man had the guts to interrupt Jesus with a complaint about his estate plan (13). So what did Jesus say to this man about money and possession? Jesus puts his finger on the root problem: greed (15). Jesus reminds us that life is more than possession (15) and Jesus illustrates his point with a story about a rich fool (20), which could be summarized like this: he who dies with the most toys...still dies. Our goal in life should not be to amass great wealth for ourselves. Rather, we should focus on becoming “rich toward God” (21).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The dangers of greed (15).
 - a. The love of money is a great danger (1 Tim. 6:10).
 - b. Money can enslave and “master” us (Matt. 6:24).
 - c. Life is more than “having the most toys” (15).
 2. Our ability to produce wealth is a gift from God (16).
 - a. The crops came from the ground (from God).
 - b. Worrying does no good. God cares for his children (Matt. 6:25-34).
 3. There is more than one way to be rich (21).
 - a. Rich for one’s self—a dangerous wealth (20-21).
 - b. Rich toward God—the way of blessing (21; 1 Tim. 6:18).
 - c. So store up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21).

Challenge Work to be rich—toward God!

Banquet Teachings

LUKE 14:1-24

Key Thought God invites everyone into his Kingdom. It's foolish to refuse.

Overview What does Jesus teach about the kingdom of God from this parable? First, God's intent is for all people to get in; the banquet host goes to extraordinary lengths to make it possible for everyone to attend (17, 21, 23). Second, God's kingdom is not just for the wealthy and talented; the banquet host makes a special effort to include the down and outers, "the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame" (21). Finally, it is possible to reject God's invitation (18-20, 24). These excuses may sound silly, but there's never a good reason for rejecting God's invitation.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God's invitation is for everyone!
 - a. He wants all come in (17, 21, 23).
 - b. He's gone to great lengths to make it possible (Jesus).
 2. God's Kingdom is not just for the "beautiful people."
 - a. He invites the "down and outers," poor, disabled, etc. (21).
 - b. We come by way of his grace, not our accomplishments (Eph. 2:8).
 3. God's invitation can be rejected (18-20).
 - a. People make all kinds of silly excuses.
 - b. Give contemporary examples.
 - c. Such foolishness results only in great loss (24).

Challenge Have you accepted God's invitation? If not, what's your excuse?

Lost and Found

LUKE 15:1-32

Key Thought Jesus illustrates God heart for the lost and his joy at their return.

Overview All of us are sinners (Rom. 3:23). That's a tough nut for anyone to swallow, so Jesus told three parables to explain what he meant. The first two, about a lost coin and a lost sheep (3-10), are fairly straightforward. The third parable, about the prodigal (wasteful) son (11-32), is more personal and adds a plot twist: sin. The theme that unites the three parables is joy (6-7, 9, 23); God rejoices when sinners repent (7, 10). But to experience that joyful reunion with God, you've got to come to grips with your own sin.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Lost people matter to God.
 - a. He recognizes we're lost (4, 8, 24, 32).
 - i. Parable of the Lost Sheep (3-7).
 - ii. Parable of the Lost Coin (8-10).
 - b. He actively seeks us out (4, 8, 20).
 - c. He rejoices when we are reunited with him (7, 9, 32).
 2. We don't have to stay "lost."
 - a. We must recognize we are lost (Rom. 3:23).
 - b. We must seek to return to God (18-20).
 - i. With repentant spirit (18-19).
 - ii. Unlike the elder son or the Pharisees (2, 28-30).
 - c. Then, we know the joy of being reunited with the Father (22-24).
 3. Will you know the joy of that reunion today?
 - a. Recognize, repent and return.

Challenge Why stay "lost" from God? He's waiting to celebrate your return.

Uncommon Prayer

LUKE 18:1-14

Key Thought These parables of Jesus illustrate how to pray effectively.

Overview In the parable about the persistent widow (1-8), Jesus holds her up as his model prayer warrior. Effective prayer often involves insisting, pleading and begging with God. It's important to note, however, that the woman's cause is consistent with God's priorities; she's praying for justice (3), not a new Cadillac. In the parable about the Pharisee and the tax collector (9-14), the obvious point is that God responds to the prayers of humility, not pride. Prayers based on our own goodness don't get too far with God. Prayers based on our need for him get a much better reception.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Be persistent (3).
 - a. See the example of the persistent widow (5).
 2. Be consistent.
 - a. With God's priorities.
 - b. The widow asked for justice (3).
 3. Be humble (14).
 - a. Pray on basis of your need (13).
 - b. Not on basis of your own goodness (1, 11-12).
 4. Be believing.
 - a. Pray in faith (Jas. 5:15).

Challenge Are your prayers as effective as they could be?

Good Crop or Weeds?

MATTHEW 13:1-58

Key Thought The kingdom of heaven is a great treasure for all who'll accept it.

Overview Taken together, these parables help us see a more complete picture of the kingdom of heaven. It starts small (like seeds) and has a unique power to grow (like a mustard seed or yeast). It's worth everything you have to obtain (like hidden treasure or a pearl) and eventually will include many, many people (like a net). There's only one dark cloud on this beautiful canvas: some will oppose the kingdom of heaven and its inhabitants (like weeds). To enter the kingdom of heaven requires knowledge and belief.

- Sermon Outline**
1. It often starts small.
 - a. God's work is often small and hardly noticeable, like a small seed (3, 31).
 - b. Give local examples.
 2. It can grow powerfully (8, 32).
 - a. Give local examples.
 3. It is a priceless treasure.
 - a. It's worth all we have; "whatever it takes" (44-45).
 - b. It's to be sought first of all (Matt. 6:33).
 4. It must be received willingly.
 - a. By those of "good soil" (8).
 - b. In child-like faith (Mark 10:14-15).
 5. It can be neglected, rejected or lost.
 - a. Neglected: shallow or thorny soil (5-7).
 - b. Rejected: weeds (26-28).
 - c. Lost: thrown out! (48).

Challenge Do "whatever it takes" to gain the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Generous Landowner

MATTHEW 20:1-16

Key Thought Salvation is not earned but accepted as a gift from God.

Overview The parable seems easy to understand: workers are hired at different points throughout the day with the promise of fair wages at the end. But those who worked 12 hours are paid the same as those who worked 1 hour. Jesus is using this seeming unfairness to make his point. The kingdom of heaven cannot be earned; it's a gift from God (Ephesians 2:8-9). Jesus was saying our salvation is dependent on God's generosity not on our good works. And the truth is, God wants everyone to enjoy the benefits of his kingdom.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The landowner appeared to be unfair (1-10).
 - a. But he was really quite generous (15).
 2. God is like that landowner.
 - a. He generously invites all into his kingdom, no matter our stage of life.
 - b. That's his right as God (15).
 3. Therefore, we know that our salvation;
 - a. Can't be earned, no matter how long or hard we work.
 - b. Is a free gift from God (Eph. 2:8-9).
 4. So don't grumble, celebrate God's goodness (11-12).
 - a. Accept his free gift of Salvation in Jesus.

Challenge Stop trying so hard and just accept God's free gift of salvation.

The Kingdom is Like...

MATTHEW 25:1-46

Key Thought It's wise to take seriously God's invitation into his Kingdom.

Overview Earlier, Jesus made the point that God invites everyone into his kingdom. Now he says some won't accept that invitation; some will be left out and it won't be God's fault. The ten virgins all had an opportunity to get ready for the bridegroom; five used it wisely and five squandered it (1-13). All three of the servants received an investment from the wealthy man; two made the most of it and one didn't (14-30). The last parable envisions a day of reckoning when Jesus will determine who will enter the kingdom of heaven and who will not.

- Sermon Outline**
1. God invites everyone to his kingdom.
 - a. All 10 virgins and all 3 servants were invited (1, 14).
 2. But not everyone takes God's invitation seriously.
 - a. Some, like the wise virgins and wise servant, do (4, 16).
 - b. Others, like the foolish virgins and lazy servant, don't (10-12, 24-7).
 3. Wise people take it seriously and prepare.
 - a. We don't know when Jesus will return (Matt. 24:44).
 - b. It's wise to keep watch and prepare (13, 24:42).
 - c. Discuss what it means to "Keep Watch" or "Be Ready."
 4. Jesus determines who'll enter his Kingdom (31-2).
 - a. He separates the "sheep from the goats" (32-33).
 - b. The "sheep," those with faith demonstrated by their actions, enter (34-40; Jas. 2:26).
 - c. The "goats" are sent to eternal punishment (41, 46).

Challenge Don't be left out of God's Kingdom. Be prepared for Jesus' return.

The Good Shepherd

JOHN 10:1-18

Key Thought The Good Shepherd leads us to life to its fullest.

Overview In this reading, Jesus uses two “figures of speech” to teach about himself—a gate to a sheep pen and a good shepherd. The point of the gate analogy is straightforward: Jesus is the entry point into God’s kingdom (9). Calling himself The Good Shepherd, Jesus emphasizes two details. The first is the shepherd’s voice. Jesus’ followers can enjoy a close relationship with him (14); they will recognize his voice (4-5). He knows your name (3); he cares about you like a shepherd cares for his sheep. The second detail is the shepherd’s willingness to sacrifice himself (11, 15).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Good Shepherd knows his sheep.
 - a. He knows us by name (3).
 - b. We can know him and recognize his voice (4).
 - c. Therefore, we can have a close relationship with him (14).
 2. He leads his sheep to “pasture” (3-4).
 - a. He is the “gate” (9).
 - b. He is the only way to God (John 14:6).
 3. He sacrifices himself for his sheep (11, 15).
 - a. To secure our redemption (Matt. 20:28; Rom. 3:24-6).
 - b. So that we might have “abundant life” (10).

Challenge Follow the Good Shepherd. He’s the only way to an abundant life.

Vine and Branches

JOHN 15:1-17

Key Thought To lead a fruitful life, we must be closely connected to Jesus.

Overview In this passage Jesus says he's the vine (1), his followers are the branches (5) and God is the gardener (1). Then, Jesus goes on to emphasize two other specific points. The main job of the branches was to bear fruit, that is, for Jesus' followers to do the things he's instructed them to do (7-8). His second point relates to love. He commanded them to love one another (17). That's tough work especially since he set the ultimate standard (13). True love involves both obedience to God's commands and sacrifice for the good of others.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus is the "true vine" (1, 4).
 - a. The vine is the source of all life for the branches (4).
 - b. Branches are dead and useless apart from the vine (6).
 - c. Dead branches are discarded by the gardener (6).
 2. His followers are the "branches" (5).
 - a. Branches are to "bear fruit" for Jesus (2, 4, 5).
 - b. Branches can only be fruitful in close relationship to the vine (4, 5).
 - c. Discuss ways to have and foster this close relationship ("remain in me").
 3. The "fruit" Jesus desires is love.
 - a. Love for one another (12, 17).
 - b. Love that follows his sacrificial example (13).
 - c. Love that obeys his commands (10, John 14:15).

Challenge Stay connected to "the vine" and you'll have a fruitful life, indeed!

Water into Wine

JOHN 2:1-11

Key Thought Jesus' first miracle illustrates a new way to relate to God.

Overview So what's the significance of Jesus' first miracle (11)? Jesus performed miracles first of all because they "revealed his glory," that is, they were evidence of his divine nature. Second, they helped people, in this case his disciples, "put their faith in him." Jesus' mission was to help people believe that he was the Son of God. Jesus was signaling that he came to establish a new way for people to have a relationship with God, a way based not on keeping the Law of Moses but rather on having faith in him.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus changed water into wine (11).
 - a. Relate the story (1-10).
 - b. The "old" wine became fresh and new.
 2. He had a purpose in mind.
 - a. He revealed his glory, his divine nature (11).
 - b. He helped people (his disciples) believe (11).
 3. He brought a new way of relating to God (Matt. 9:17).
 - a. A way not based on law but on faith (Eph. 2:8).
 4. He still does miracles today.
 - a. Let him change your life.
 - b. He'll give you a new, fresh relationship with God.

Challenge Let Jesus take your "old" spiritual life and make it fresh and new!

Calming the Storm

MARK 4:35-41

Key Thought Whatever we face, we needn't fear. Jesus is with us.

Overview This miracle reveals another aspect of Jesus' glory: he has power over the forces of nature. Anyone who's ever been out on a boat in a big storm (or even a rough sea) knows the feeling of powerlessness and fear that comes from being out of control. Everyone struggles with fear at some point. But that's the point behind Jesus' seemingly unfair questions (40): things are never out of control when we are with him. Jesus has the power to change not only the wind and the waves, but also every force at work in our lives.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus calms a terrible storm.
 - a. It threatens the disciple's lives (37).
 - b. The disciples are afraid and powerless (38).
 2. Jesus is with them in the boat.
 - a. He calms the storm and saves their lives (39).
 - b. He demonstrates his divine power over nature (41).
 3. We are often like those disciples.
 - a. We are afraid, at the mercy of forces beyond our control.
 - b. Give some examples of our fears and feelings of powerlessness.
 4. Jesus is with us in the "boat" of life.
 - a. He's with us always (Matt. 28:20).
 - b. We need not fear (Matt. 14:22-3).
 - c. He'll work in our fears and troubles to bring us good (Rom. 8:28).

Challenge Trust your fears to Jesus. He's got everything under control!

The Miracle Meal

MATTHEW 14:13-21

Key Thought When facing impossible situations, turn to Jesus first!

Overview Jesus already knows he can feed the 5,000 men plus many women and children (21). But he challenges the disciples to solve the problem on their own (16). Their first instinct was to look at their own resources (17), They concluded that they didn't have enough to solve the problem. But Jesus was probing whether or not his disciples would look to him first to solve the problem. Note that he says, "Bring them here to me" (18). And "They all ate and were satisfied" (20). Jesus has resources far greater than we can ever imagine (Psa. 50:10).

- Sermon Outline**
1. When we face a problem or challenge:
 - a. It's often urgent (15-16).
 - b. It often seems impossible (17).
 - c. Give contemporary examples.
 2. Our first instinct is to:
 - a. Look to our own Resources: "We have here only..." (17).
 - b. Worry.
 - c. Complain (17).
 3. We can bring what we do have to Jesus.
 - a. "Bring them here to me..." (18).
 4. He can "multiply" our resources to meet our need.
 - a. "All ate and were satisfied" (20).
 - b. We can give him all our problems (1 Pet. 5:7; Psa. 55:22).

Challenge Give your biggest problem or worry to Jesus. He can handle it.

Walking on Water

MATTHEW 14:22-33

Key Thought Jesus challenges us not to doubt but to trust him to be there for us.

Overview Peter had never seen a man walking on water; it might have been a mirage or even a ghost. Still, he stepped out of the boat. That's the essence of faith, the willingness to move forward trusting God even when the way is unclear. I wonder what Peter felt in that moment when he realized he was sinking into the raging waters; embarrassment, panic, fear? Now imagine Peter's emotions when he felt the strong grip of Jesus on his arm. Peter learned an important lesson that day: calling out to Jesus is the best way to overcome fear.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Stepping out of the boat in the storms of life.
 - a. Financial,
 - b. Relational,
 - c. Health, etc.
 2. Jesus is with us.
 - a. We don't need to be afraid (27).
 - b. We don't need to doubt him (31).
 3. Jesus calls us to get out of the boat.
 - a. To step out in faith and trust him to save us (29).
 - b. To trust him even if the way seems unclear or impossible.
 4. If we lose faith and "start to sink" (30):
 - a. We can call out to Jesus (30).
 - b. He'll be there to rescue us (31).
 - c. Just trust. Don't doubt him (31).

Challenge When the storms of life hit, get out of the boat and walk with Jesus!

Powerful Faith

MATTHEW 21.18-22

Key Thought Jesus calls us to build a fruitful life based on faith and prayer.

Overview The point of Jesus' sharp words and miraculous withering of the fig tree was about bearing fruit. He wanted his followers to know that bearing fruit is serious business and there's no time to waste. Producing fruit involves at least two things: faith and prayer. This means faith built on a deep relationship with our Heavenly Father and transforming prayer that enables us to understand and submit to his will—which may be radically different from our request. Our challenge is developing a prayer life built on an unwavering trust that God will accomplish his purposes, his way.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus' followers are called to be fruitful.
 - a. The fig tree cursed because it was fruitless (19).
 - b. Christians must bear fruit (John 15:2; Matt. 13:23).
 - c. Fruit-bearing for Jesus is vital and urgent (19).
 2. Being "fruitful" for Jesus requires:
 - a. Unwavering faith (21; Jas. 1:6-18).
 - b. Persistent prayer (Luke 18:1-8; Matt. 7:7).
 3. A fruitful life is a powerful and effectual life.
 - a. You can "move mountains" (21-22; Jas. 5:16).
 - b. You can give and receive great blessings.

Challenge What kind of "mountains" might you move by faith and prayer?

Blind Eyes Opened

JOHN 9:1-41

Key Thought Jesus heals both spiritual and physical blindness.

Overview Why is it so difficult for some to accept the fact the Jesus heals people? When told about Jesus healing the blind man, the Pharisees condemned it on a technicality (16). The blind man was the only one who saw the light (5). Instead of questioning or challenging Jesus, he simply obeyed (7). Next, he honestly shared his experience with others (11, 25), even defending it in spite of the pressure tactics used against him (24-34). Finally, after taking time to think it through, he put his faith in Jesus (38).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The blind man.
 - a. Physically blind since birth (2, 20).
 2. Spiritual blindness of the religious leaders.
 - a. They condemned Jesus' good deed (24).
 - b. They were more concerned for rules than goodness (16).
 3. One received sight.
 - a. The blind man was healed (7, 5).
 - b. He told others what Jesus had done for him (11, 25).
 - c. He believed Jesus (38).
 4. Others remained blind (41).
 - a. They pressured the blind man and his family (18-33).
 - b. They threatened to "excommunicate" believers (22).
 - c. They refused to see the truth (40-41).
 5. We can choose to be healed by Jesus or remain blind.

Challenge Don't be blind to Jesus. Let him open your eyes.

Paralyzed No Longer

LUKE 5:17-26

Key Thought In love and faith, we can bring our friends to Jesus' healing touch.

Overview I can imagine the hard work it took to lug a paralyzed man across town. It took four men to lift him. But they did it for at least two reasons. First, they loved their friend and showed it by sacrificial work. And second, they believed Jesus could make a difference. It also took faith, as Jesus pointed out (20). It's significant that Jesus healed the man because of "their faith." Sometimes God intervenes in the lives of people based on the faith of those around them. It's a reality that should energize our prayer and service for others.

- Sermon Outline**
1. It's an act of love.
 - a. They showed their love by their effort on his behalf (18-19).
 2. It's an act of faith.
 - a. They believed Jesus could help their friend (20).
 3. It's a life-changing act.
 - a. The man's body was healed (25).
 - b. The man was healed spiritually (forgiven) (20).
 - c. Jesus sometimes acts in other's lives because of our faith.
 4. It's an act bringing praise to God (25-26).
 5. It's an act we can do, too!
 - a. Who do you love enough to bring them to Jesus?
 - b. Discuss some practical ways to do that.

Challenge Who can you bring to the life-changing healing of Jesus?

Demons Removed

MARK 5:1-20

Key Thought Satan destroys people's lives but Jesus has power over him.

Overview The Bible teaches throughout that the devil is real. The devil had been at work in this poor man's life for a long time. He'd tortured his mind and body and alienated the man from himself and society. But Jesus wasn't about to let that happen. First, Jesus took control of the situation and of the demons (6-8). Next, Jesus dealt with the demons once and for all (11-13), something the townspeople had never been able to do (4). And finally, Jesus restored the man and gave him a renewed purpose in life (18-20).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Satan should be taken seriously!
 - a. He's determined to deceive and destroy (Rev. 20:7-10; Job 2:1-8).
 - b. He wants to isolate us from God and destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8).
 2. But Jesus has power over Satan.
 - a. He and his minions know who Jesus is (7).
 - b. He "gave them permission" (13).
 - c. He healed the man and freed him from the power that held him captive (15).
 3. Yet some people still fear Jesus' power.
 - a. They pleaded with Jesus to leave then (17).
 - b. Are you afraid of Jesus and his power?
 4. Some people are captive to Satan today.
 - a. Discuss some ways this is apparent.
 - b. How has he held you captive?
 - c. Will you let Jesus free you or are you afraid?

Challenge Don't be afraid of Satan. Jesus' power is much, much greater!

A Healing Touch

MARK 5:21-43

Key Thought Jesus responds to faith that's willing to do "whatever it takes."

Overview This passage weaves together the accounts of two miracles of Jesus. An unnamed woman in the crowd had suffered from uncontrollable bleeding for twelve years (25). Her friends may have criticized her desperate scheme (28). But Jesus said, "Your faith has healed you" (34). Sometimes faith requires us to take desperate measures. Next, the daughter of Jairus, a man who would have been aligned with the group opposing Jesus, was sick. His colleagues may have criticized Jairus for being a turncoat. But Jesus said, "Don't be afraid; just believe" (36). Sometimes faith requires us to ignore what others think.

- Sermon Outline**
1. What do you need Jesus to do for you?
 - a. Healing?—like the unnamed woman or Jairus.
 - b. Other help?
 2. Faith is required.
 - a. Both the woman and Jairus "fell at Jesus' feet" (22, 33).
 - b. The woman: "Your faith has healed you" (34).
 - c. Jairus: "Don't be afraid; just believe"(36).
 3. Sometimes having faith means:
 - a. Doing "whatever it takes."
 - b. Being willing to take desperate measures (27).
 - c. Ignoring what others might think (22-23).
 4. Then humbly call on Jesus.
 - a. They fell at his feet (22, 33).
 - b. He'll hear and answer (24).

Challenge When you call on Jesus, you'd better be willing to do "whatever it takes."

Lazarus Lives!

JOHN 11:1-45

Key Thought We needn't fear death because Jesus has power over it.

Overview Jesus claimed he was the resurrection and the life (25-26). Instead of seeing this as a threat, his followers both then and now understand what a wonderful promise it is: believing in Jesus is the way to eternal life (John 14:6). The Bible teaches that the resurrection of Jesus was the ultimate validation of his divine nature and mission (1 Corinthians 15:1-34). This miraculous raising of Lazarus as well as the raising of Jairus' daughter, were early signs of the greatest resurrection that was soon to come, when God raised his own Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus has power over death.
 - a. He raised Lazarus from the dead (43).
 - b. He raised Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:40-42).
 2. Jesus is the way to eternal life (14:6).
 - a. He is "the resurrection and the life" for us (25).
 - b. Because he rose, we shall, too (1 Cor. 15:20-23).
 3. Jesus, himself, rose from the dead.
 - a. He will one day defeat death for all time (1 Cor. 15:51-55).
 - b. We have victory over death through Jesus (1 Cor. 15:57).
 4. Not even death can separate us from Christ (Rom. 8:38-9).

Challenge In light of what Jesus has done, how do you feel about your own death?

Morning Prayer

MARK 1:29-39

Key Thought We can learn a lot about prayer from watching how Jesus did it.

Overview In this passage, we gain some unique insights into the prayer life of Jesus. He prayed early. Jesus got up “while it was still dark” to pray. Prayer was the first thing on his mind for the day. He prayed without distraction. Jesus went to a “solitary place” to pray. He prayed no matter what. Jesus prayed in spite of the well-meaning pressure from his disciples (37). We’ll always feel the pressure to get busy, but without prayer, it’s difficult to make a difference for God.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus prayed early.
 - a. Very early in the morning (35).
 - b. Before the day got busy (38).
 2. He avoided distractions.
 - a. He went to a “solitary place” (35; Matt. 14:23).
 - b. He could concentrate on being with his Father.
 3. He made prayer a priority.
 - a. He prayed even when busy (37-39).
 - b. Sometimes, he prayed all night (Luke 6:12).
 4. We can learn to pray from Jesus.
 - a. To make prayer a priority.
 - b. That our Christian effectiveness depends on prayer.

Challenge How can you begin to pray like Jesus?

Joyful Prayer

LUKE 10:1-24

Key Thought We learn vital elements of prayer from listening to Jesus pray.

Overview But in the middle of this victory celebration, Jesus took time for an impromptu prayer meeting (21). The first thing we notice is the emphasis on joy (21) because he saw that Satan was being defeated (18) and God's self-revelation was becoming more clear and understandable—even to the most unlikely persons (21). Another thing we notice is Jesus' confidence in God's plan: "Yes, Father, for this was your good pleasure" (21). When we really understand that God is in control of everything, we can be bold. Confidence in God's power and will is another vital part of prayer.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Pray with joy.
 - a. Satan is defeated (18).
 - b. We are God's own (20) and he hears us (Psa. 34:15, 1 Pet. 3:12).
 2. Pray with confidence.
 - a. God is in control.
 - b. He's working out his purposes (21).
 3. Pray with faith.
 - a. Don't doubt (Mark 11:24; Jas. 1:6).
 - b. Don't worry (Luke 12:22-31).

Challenge When you pray like Jesus, any time is a great time to pray!

Model Prayer

LUKE 11:1-13

Key Thought Jesus shows us how to have an effective prayer life.

Overview Effective prayer involves two perspectives. First, in prayer we must look beyond ourselves to God, his nature, holiness, kingdom and will (2). And second, we should not be hesitant to focus on our day-to-day needs—food, forgiveness, and strength to avoid temptation (3, 4). Jesus also encourages boldness (5-10). The boldness is related to the intensity and persistence of the requestor (9, 10), as well as the conviction that God is able to meet any genuine need. Jesus assures us that faith in our loving Heavenly Father, combined with a bold persistence in prayer will get incredible results (Matt. 17:20-21).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Focus first on God (2).
 - a. His holiness, Kingdom and will (2).
 2. Feel free to include your needs.
 - a. Basic daily needs (3).
 - b. Forgiveness (4).
 - c. Strength to avoid temptation (4).
 3. Pray boldly.
 - a. Don't hesitate to ask for whatever, whenever (5-8).
 - b. Keep asking-persist! (9-10).
 4. Trust God's loving heart.
 - a. He'll give his children good things.
 5. Just Do It!
 - a. Don't wait until you feel like an "expert."
 - b. Practice makes perfect!

Challenge Jesus gave you the model prayer. Now go practice!

Prayer for Unity

JOHN 17:1-26

Key Thought Jesus reveals his will for us in his “high priestly prayer.”

Overview This is often referred to as Jesus’ “high priestly prayer,” because in it he interceded for his disciples and all believers. Jesus begins by praying for himself (1-5) because “the time has come” (1) for him to complete his mission. Jesus then prays for his disciples (6-19) and asks for three things. First, they’ll need God’s protection (11, 15). Second, he prays that the disciples would have “my joy” (13). Finally, he prays that they be sanctified. Jesus finishes by praying for the unity of all who would believe in him as a result of the disciples’ message (20-26).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus prayed for himself.
 - a. The time had come for him to be glorified in death and resurrection (1).
 - b. By this he’d give eternal life to all who believe (2-3).
 2. Jesus prayed for his disciples.
 - a. For protection from Satan’s power to divide and deceive them (11, 15).
 - b. For joy at being one with Jesus and his mission in the world (13).
 - c. For sanctification by God’s Word of truth (17).
 3. Jesus prayed for us and all believers.
 - a. For unity with God and with each other (20-21).
 - b. So that others might believe in Jesus, also (23).
 - c. What should/can this unity look like?

Challenge How can you help answer Jesus’ prayer?

“Not My Will, but Yours”

MARK 14:32-42

Key Thought Jesus shows us how to pray under the most extreme pressure!

Overview How did Jesus pray when he was under pressure? The answer is packed into a single verse (36). He starts by calling out to his Father. The word “Abba” literally means “daddy.” Next, he affirms what he knows to be true; all things are possible for God. Jesus then makes his request; “take this cup from me,” in other words, “if there’s another way to accomplish your plan of salvation without sacrificing me, please do it!” Jesus concludes by accepting God’s will, whatever it may be. That’s the same principle Jesus included in his model prayer (Matt. 6:10).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Begin by calling on God.
 - a. He’s your father (36).
 - b. He welcomes your prayer (1 Pet. 3:12).
 2. Remember God is in control.
 - a. He can do all things (36).
 - b. He works all things for your good (Rom. 8:28).
 3. Make your request.
 - a. Whatever it is.
 - b. Jesus didn’t hesitate to ask to escape death (36).
 4. Accept God’s will.
 - a. Whatever it is (36).
 - b. Even if it’s not what you want.

Challenge The pressure will come. Be prepared to pray.

The Bread of Life

JOHN 6:25-71

Key Thought In the Communion service, we “feed on Jesus’ spiritually.

Overview “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life...” (54). No wonder the disciples were confused and offended (60-61). And no wonder the religious leaders are outraged; in addition to the disgusting image of eating human flesh, the Law of Moses contained specific regulations about not consuming blood or even meat with blood in it (Leviticus 17:13-14). But Jesus wasn’t talking about physically consuming his flesh and blood. Rather, he’s talking about the spiritual union that he has with his followers. Those who truly put their faith and trust in him are united with God (57) and have eternal life (40).

- Sermon Outline**
1. “Eat my flesh and drink my blood” (54).
 - a. It offended his disciples (60-61).
 - b. It offended the religious leaders (52; Lev. 17:13-14)
 2. Understand this saying in context.
 - a. The people were thinking physically (26).
 - i. The miracle of feeding had just taken place (6:1-15).
 - ii. They wanted more food (26).
 - b. Jesus was speaking spiritually.
 - i. He is the source of eternal life (27, 48, 54).
 - ii. He invites us to “feed on him” (54, 57).
 3. We have the privilege of feeding on him today.
 - a. When we receive Holy Communion.

Challenge Don’t be offended. Gladly “feed on Jesus.”

The Unforgivable Sin

MARK 3:20-35

Key Thought Repentant spirits need not worry about the “unforgivable sin.”

Overview The religious leaders were frustrated with Jesus; he'd been teaching, healing and attracting big crowds (20). That's why they wanted to discredit him in the eyes of the public by accusing him of demon possession (22). In response Jesus tells a parable that easily repels the false accusation (23-27). His point about eternal sin was that by equating the work of the Holy Spirit with demon possession, the religious leaders were turning away from God. While they persisted in that, they could not be forgiven. The “unforgivable sin” is an on-going unwillingness to repent that prevents us from being forgiven.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The context for the saying.
 - a. Crowds were coming to Jesus, frustrating the religious leaders (20, 3:6).
 - b. To discredit him, they accused him of demon-possession (22).
 2. Jesus' Rebuke and Reply.
 - a. “A house divided can not stand” (23-27).
 - b. The eternal (unforgivable) sin pronounced (29).
 3. An explanation and comfort.
 - a. God is eager to forgive repentant sinners (Luke 15:11-35).
 - b. Refusal to repent and accept forgiveness is the “eternal sin.”
 - c. Repentant spirits need not worry about committing it!

Challenge Are there sins for which you need to repent? If so, do so.

A Prayer Guarantee

JOHN 14:1-14

Key Thought We can pray with confidence if we truly pray “in Jesus’ name.”

Overview Our passage today is part of a final coaching session Jesus had with his disciples (John 14-16). The key to unlocking the mystery of Jesus’ “prayer guarantee” lies in two phrases that are easy to overlook. The first is “in my name.” When we pray, we should ask for things that are consistent with what Jesus taught and did. The second is “bring glory to the Father.” When we pray, our focus should be on things that help more people understand who God really is. Those are the kind of prayers that get results.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Prayer Guarantee: It’s often misinterpreted (14).
 - a. People “name it and claim it” (no matter what “it” is!)
 - b. People say “I tried it and it didn’t work” (so it can’t be true).
 2. But the guarantee is good!
 - a. If we pray in his name.
 - i. Praying for things consistent with Jesus’ life and teachings.
 - ii. Praying for things that help people know God better.
 3. If it doesn’t seem so, evaluate your prayers.
 - a. How do they “measure up” to Jesus’ standards?
 - b. What results have you seen?

Challenge Pray prayers that get results! Apply the “Prayer Guarantee”!

Unlimited Forgiveness

MATTHEW 18:15-35

Key Thought We must forgive others if we expect God to forgive us.

Overview Jesus begins by explaining a very practical method for resolving conflict (15-20). First, talk to the person...privately. Then go with others and then involve the church. As a last resort, the relationship must be put on hold. Then, Peter asks a question about when he can stop forgiving (21). But when we really understand how much God has forgiven us, we know we must forgive others. That all that sets up one of the most challenging statements Jesus ever made (35). The point of the parable (23-34) is that God is serious about forgiveness and we must be, too.

- Sermon Outline**
1. What if someone offends me?
 - a. Go to them privately to try to reconcile (15).
 - b. Next, go with one or two friends (16).
 - c. Next, go to the church fellowship (17).
 - d. As a last resort, put the relationship "on hold" (17).
 2. How much must I forgive?
 - a. As many times as required (22).
 3. Why must I be so forgiving?
 - a. That's the way god has forgiven you (23-34).
 - b. God expects us to be forgiving if we are to be forgiven, too (35).

Challenge If there's someone you should forgive, it's dangerous to put it off!

The Cost of Discipleship

MARK 8:31—9:1

Key Thought We “take up our cross” when we put Jesus’ agenda first in our life.

Overview For Jesus, taking up his cross was a symbol of all-out obedience to his Father’s will. It would mean giving up his rights as the Son of God (Philippians 2:5-8) and dying on the Cross for the sins of the world (John 19:17-18). For us it will mean that the focus of our lives will be drawing closer to Jesus and becoming more single-minded about sharing him with others, by our words and by our actions (35). We must “die” to our own agenda and live for Jesus’. In the end, that’s the only thing worth living for (35-36).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Taking up your Cross: What it meant for Jesus.
 - a. Giving up his rights as the eternal son (Phil. 2:5-8).
 - b. Dying on the Cross for our sins (John 19:17-18).
 - c. Following the father’s will for him (Matt. 26:39).
 2. What it doesn’t mean for us.
 - a. Putting up with unpleasant circumstances or people.
 - b. Coping with disease, financial setbacks, etc.
 3. What it does mean for us.
 - a. “Losing our life” to share the Gospel (35).
 - b. Seeking Jesus’ way first in all things (Matt. 6:33).
 - c. Dying to our own agenda and following Jesus’.
 4. What does it mean for you?

Challenge How will you “take up your cross” and follow Jesus today?

Betrayed and Arrested

MATTHEW 26:47-56

Key Thought Jesus shows us how to respond when a friend betrays us.

Overview We don't really know what motivated Judas to betray Jesus. But we know that his act was intentional. Judas planned exactly how he would do it (48-49). How incredible then that Jesus still called Judas his "friend" (50). But perhaps the most striking thing about this passage is the confidence of Jesus. Even though he could have stopped Judas and his posse dead in their tracks (53), Jesus allows himself to be arrested without a fight(56). That's because his highest priority wasn't to save his own skin; it was to fulfill the mission God had given him (54, 56).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Judas' plot.
 - a. He intentionally planned his act of betrayal (48-9).
 - b. Even though he was Jesus' friend (50).
 2. Jesus' reaction.
 - a. He didn't fight back (53)
 - b. He knew he had to "do the right thing" (56)
 3. You, too, may be betrayed by a friend.
 - a. As David was (Psa. 55:13, 20).
 - b. It may be intentional (Psa. 35:11-12, 20).
 4. How should you respond?
 - a. "Do the right thing" (Psa. 55:22).
 - b. Call on God to defend you (Psa. 35:22-23, 55:16-19).

Challenge Even if a friend betrays you, be sure to "do the right thing."

False Accusations

MATTHEW 26:57-68

Key Thought We must decide for ourselves if we believe Jesus claims.

Overview Jesus was at the mercy of this Sanhedrin court. Caiaphas and his cronies were breaking all the rules of due process. First, the trial took place at night instead of during the day. Second, the charges were based on false evidence (59) and false witnesses (60). And the judge and jury had already made up their minds to execute Jesus (59). Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (63-65); Caiaphas rightly identified that as the central issue, but he was unwilling to accept Jesus on that basis. That's the biggest mistake anyone can ever make.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus on trial: The trial was a sham!
 - a. It was held at night.
 - b. There was false evidence given (59).
 - c. There were false witnesses (60).
 - d. The verdict had already been decided (59).
 2. Jesus' "defense" was rejected.
 - a. Jesus claimed to be the Son of God (63-65).
 - b. His claim was rejected by the High Priest (65).
 - c. The verdict was "guilty."
 3. What's your verdict on Jesus?
 - a. Weigh the evidence from the Bible (John 14:6-12).
 - b. Weigh the evidence from witnesses (Matt. 16:16, 28:1-10).
 - c. Decide for yourself whether Jesus' claim is true (Matt. 16:13-15).
 - d. It's the most important decision you'll ever make! (John 3:18; 1 John 5:12).

Challenge Weigh the evidence and decide your own "verdict" on Jesus.

Peter Disowns Jesus

MATTHEW 26:69—27:10

Key Thought We may deny Jesus but he's ready to forgive and restore us.

Overview Peter's first denial is that of a double agent (26:70), perhaps he said it to stay inside the enemy's camp. Then, in the face of mounting pressure, he denies Jesus with greater emphasis (26:72). When Peter is forced to declare where he stands with Jesus, he gives a final, angry denial (26:74). However, Jesus used this episode to strengthen Peter's faith for a future of productive ministry (John 21:15-19). If we're willing to repent of the ways we deny Jesus, no failure is so great that it can separate us from God or keep us from serving him (Rom. 8:28-39).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Peter's Denials.
 - a. A casual "I don't know what you're talking about" (70).
 - b. A pressured "I don't know the man" (72).
 - c. A final, angry "I don't know the man" (74; Mark 14:71).
 2. Peter's repentance.
 - a. He wept bitterly at his denial (75).
 3. Jesus' response.
 - a. The Lord looked straight at Peter (Luke 22:61).
 - i. In Sorrow?
 - ii. In Disappointment?
 - b. The Lord restored Peter (John 21:15-19).
 4. What are some ways we deny Jesus today?
 - a. What are some pressures to do so?
 5. When we, like Peter, buckle under pressure, we can:
 - a. Repent and be restored.
 - b. Trust in God's continuing love (Rom. 8:28-39).

Challenge Don't buckle under pressure. Stand up for Jesus!

The Innocent Condemned

LUKE 22:66—23:25

Key Thought Christians can avoid misusing politics by focused on Jesus first.

Overview In this reading, political concerns have overwhelmed true religion. Notice the spin the religious leaders put on their accusations of Jesus, “He’s undercutting our national security, he opposes your tax policy and he’s planning a political takeover” (my paraphrase of 23:2). It’s all about politics. Christians need to be careful not to misuse faith issues in politics or worse, to politicize the mission of the church. That’s why I am moved every time I sing the Matt Redman song about the church, “It’s all about you, Jesus.”

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus’ trial is all about politics.
 - a. National security, tax policy and political revolution are the issues (23:2).
 - b. It was a religious dispute disguised as a political struggle.
 2. True religion gets overwhelmed and lost in the struggle.
 - a. Jesus told them who he was (70).
 - b. They refused to listen (67-71).
 3. So be careful mixing politics and religion.
 - a. Give local or contemporary examples of the dangers.
 - b. Let your faith influence your politics, not vice versa.
 4. Keep the focus where it belongs.
 - a. It’s all about Jesus!

Challenge Let Jesus rule your politics. Don’t let your politics rule out Jesus.

Dead and Buried

LUKE 23:26-56

Key Thought There's only one right way to respond to Jesus.

Overview In the midst of his ordeal, Jesus was more concerned about others than himself. To the women mourning for him, Jesus offers a prophetic warning (27-31). To those who mocked him, Jesus offered forgiveness (34). To the angry thief Jesus offers silence (39); he doesn't try to retaliate. And to the repentant thief, Jesus promises paradise (43). This passage offers us the defining picture of Jesus. Because of our sin, we're all condemned to die; we're either one thief or the other. The real question is how will we respond, with insults (39) or with a heartfelt "remember me" (42)?

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus' response to those at the cross.
 - a. To the mockers, he offered forgiveness (34).
 - b. To the angry thief, he offered silence, not condemnation (39).
 - c. To the repentant thief, he offered paradise (43).
 2. What would you say to Jesus?
 - a. Are you a mocker? (Give examples).
 - b. Are you angry with Jesus? (Give reasons).
 - c. Are you repentant?
 3. Your response to Jesus determines his response to you.
 - a. Be like the repentant thief, receive forgiveness and the promise of paradise.
 - b. Stand up for Jesus and he'll stand up for you (Luke 9:26).

Challenge How will you respond to Jesus?

He is Risen!

MATTHEW 28:1-20

Key Thought The Risen Lord still encounters people in life changing ways.

Overview The facts: the earthquake was violent (2); no wonder the guards were scared stiff (4). The angel had a dazzling appearance (3). The two Marys (8-10) were overwhelmed with fear and joy (8). Even so, the angel gives them a threefold command—don't be afraid (5), come and see (6), go and tell (7). For the two Marys it led to a life-changing encounter with Christ (9). Meanwhile, the religious leaders pay the guards to lie about what happened. Then comes the great commission, a vision of worldwide evangelism and the promise that Jesus will be with us forever (20).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Two Marys encounter the angel (1-3).
 - a. They receive the Angel's 3-fold command.
 - i. "Do not be afraid" (5).
 - ii. "Come and see" (6).
 - iii. "Go and tell" (7).
 2. Two Marys encounter the risen Jesus.
 - a. They meet Jesus and receive his command (9, 10).
 - i. "Do not be afraid."
 - ii. "Go and tell."
 3. The disciples encounter the Risen Jesus.
 - a. They, too, receive his command (17, 19).
 - i. "Go and make disciples."
 - ii. "Baptize them."
 - iii. "Teach them to obey."
 4. Have you had a resurrection encounter with Jesus?
 - a. Have you received your command to "Go...?"
 - b. Have you heard Jesus' promise to be with you always (20)?

Challenge If you've met the Risen Lord, you have your marching orders.

“Go... and Preach”

MARK 16:1-20

Key Thought The Good News of Jesus has real, life-changing power.

Overview This reading gives us two unique insights into this event. There are consequences to our choices about the gospel (15-16). Jesus’ words are not just motivational, “Go into all the world...” (15). Here, he links them to another of his “hard sayings”; our response to the Good News determines whether we’re “saved” or “condemned” (16). There is power in the message of the gospel (17-18). We shouldn’t sensationalize these verses or attempt dangerous things without clear direction from the Lord. But the fact remains Jesus said we would do “even greater things” after his death and resurrection (John 14:12).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Gospel has power to save.
 - a. Our choice determines our fate (15-16).
 - b. Jesus and his Word are our judge (John 5:24-29).
 2. The Gospel has power to do great things.
 - a. In Jesus’ name, there is miraculous power (17-18).
 - i. Explain these difficult verses.
 - ii. Handle this power with care!
 - b. In Jesus’ name, we’ll do “greater things” (John 14:12-14). (Give examples).
 3. The Gospel has power to change lives.
 - a. How has it changed (or could it change) yours?

Challenge Do great things in the power of the Gospel!

He's No Ghost

LUKE 24:1-49

Key Thought The Bible clears up any misconceptions about who Jesus is.

Overview We can easily imagine the shock and discouragement these men were feeling (17b). The problem was they didn't understand who Jesus really was; they thought he was a prophet destined to become Israel's political savior (19-21). Jesus wasn't the leader of a political movement; he was "the Christ," the one God had promised to send in order to save humankind from sin (26). And the way he would accomplish that is through suffering, death and resurrection. Discover for yourself "what was said in all the Scriptures" (27) about the essential Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Misconceptions about Jesus: The disciple's then.
 - a. He was just a man (a prophet) (19).
 - b. He was a failed political leader (21).
 - c. He was a big disappointment (17b).
 2. People's misconceptions now.
 - a. He was just a man (although, perhaps a "good" one).
 - b. He was a wise teacher or prophet.
 - c. He's a political/moral leader for today.
 - d. Others? Yours?
 3. Who do you say Jesus is? (Matt. 16:15).
 - a. Search the scriptures and find the answer (27).
 - b. Decide for yourself (as Peter did—Matt. 16:16).

Challenge Clear up your misconceptions and decide for yourself about Jesus.

Eyewitness Accounts

JOHN 20:1—21:25

Key Thought People then reacted to Jesus' resurrection much like people today.

Overview John describes how different people reacted to the resurrection. Mary Magdalene had cured of demon-possession by Jesus (Mark 16:9, Luke 8:2). She was the first one to the tomb. Others had questions about Jesus' resurrection (20:9), but Thomas was the only one with the guts to admit them...and publicly change his mind when presented with the truth (20:28). Peter had failed Jesus and must re-affirm his love for him. It's clear John has developed a special relationship with Jesus and a firm belief in the truth of his resurrection (20:8). The two go hand in hand.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Reactions to the resurrection: Mary Magdalene
 - a. Cured by Jesus of demon-possession (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2).
 - b. First at the tomb.
 - c. Forgiven greatly, greatly committed (Luke 7:41-43).
 2. Thomas.
 - a. Had doubts and questions (20:25).
 - b. Saw the evidence and believed (20:28).
 3. Peter.
 - a. Failed Jesus miserably (Matt. 26:69-75).
 - b. Reaffirmed his allegiance to Jesus and was restored (21:15-19).
 4. John.
 - a. Had a special relationship with Jesus (20:2, 21:7).
 - b. Firmly believed in the resurrection (20:8).

Challenge Which of these reflects your reaction? Whichever it is, believe!

His Resurrection and Ours

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-58

Key Thought Jesus' resurrection is central to our Christian faith and hope.

Overview Several years after Jesus lived people were beginning to ask tough questions about the resurrection. Paul answers by asserting the historical fact of the resurrection (12-34). Jesus was actually raised from the dead (20) and there were lots of eyewitnesses (5-8). Then, he addresses the personal impact of the resurrection (35-58). Paul does his best to describe our resurrection bodies (37-49). We won't really know what it will be like but we do know that our spiritual bodies will be imperishable, glorious and powerful (42-44). That gives us a lot of hope—based on the fact of the resurrection (1 Pet. 1:3).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The challenge to the resurrection.
 - a. People say it didn't happen.
 - i. A myth or lie.
 - ii. Mass hallucination.
 - iii. The body stolen.
 2. The fact of the resurrection.
 - a. Jesus was actually raised (20).
 - b. There were many eye-witnesses (5-8).
 - i. Paul saw the risen Christ, too (Acts 9:1-19).
 - c. The Resurrection is central to our faith (17-19).
 3. The hope of the resurrection.
 - a. It impacts "me"!
 - i. A glorious resurrection body (42-44).
 - b. The resurrection is central to our hope (1 Pet. 1:3).

Challenge What difference does the resurrection make to you today?

A Message for the Churches

REVELATION 1:1-20

Key Thought The Book of Revelation is about Jesus, first of all.

Overview The Book of Revelation is all about Jesus. Jesus is called “the first born from the dead” (5; Col. 1:15, 18); he has freed us from sin “by his blood” (5b; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7); his followers are “a kingdom and priests” (6; 1 Peter 2:9); and someday Jesus will come again and “every eye will see him” (7; Phil. 2:9-11) His is a majestic appearance and powerful voice (12-15). He is eternal, he is alive and he will decide who goes to heaven or hell (17-18). Jesus has something to say about the church of the First Century, too (11).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Jesus in Revelation (and the rest of the New Testament).
 - a. First born from the dead (5; Col. 1:15, 18).
 - b. Freed us from sin by his blood (5b; Rom. 5:9; Eph. 1:7).
 - c. His followers are “a kingdom and priests” (6; 1 Pet. 2:9).
 - d. When he returns, “every eye will see him” (7; Phil. 2:9-11).
 2. Jesus in Revelation (new insights from John).
 - a. His majestic appearance and powerful voice (12-15).
 - b. He is eternal (17-18).
 - c. He decides a person’s eternal fate (18).
 - d. He has a message for his church (11).
 3. What do you believe about Jesus?
 - a. From what the Bible says.
 - b. From your own experience.

Challenge What “message” might he have for you and your church?

Repent and Be Faithful

REVELATION 2:1-11

Key Thought Jesus tells us what really matters to him about the church.

Overview Here, we read Jesus' assessment of the churches in the First Century. The first one was in the city of Ephesus (1-7). The good news is that they were activists; they were willing to work hard (2). The bad news was they'd forsaken their first love, Jesus (4). The way to rekindle dying love is to repent and start over again (5). The second church, Smyrna (8-11), was one of two that were singled out for commendation only (the other is in Philadelphia, 3:7-14). They were poor, were being criticized, and their members were about to suffer persecution and imprisonment (8-10).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Lessons from the Church at Ephesus.
 - a. Work hard for the Gospel (2).
 - b. Hate/avoid false teaching (2, 6).
 - c. Persevere in faith under hardship (3).
 - d. Keep your love for Jesus aflame (4)!
 - e. Be willing and ready to repent when necessary (5).
 2. Lessons from the Church at Smyrna.
 - a. It's not necessarily bad to be poor (or small) or criticized (9).
 - b. Faithfulness earns "the crown of life" (10).
 3. Does our Church have what it takes to grow?
 - a. "Rate" it by the Lord's words in Revelation.
 - b. What needs to change?

Challenge Don't "forsake your first love" for Jesus. Keep it aflame!

“I Have This Against You”

REVELATION 2:12-29

Key Thought For churches struggling to stay faithful, Jesus offers the solution.

Overview The two churches in this reading had the same problem. The church at Pergamum (12-17) had remained true to Jesus during unusual stress and persecution (13). But that spiritual victory was long past; now they were being enticed by false teaching (14-15). The church in Thyatira was also tolerating false teaching (20). And it led to immoral behavior (20). So how do we live with the fact that there's no perfect church? Jesus says, “Hold on to what you have until I come” (25). In other words, remain faithful to God's Word and eagerly look forward to Jesus' return.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The problems of the Church at Pergamum.
 - a. It was living on past “glories” (13).
 - b. It was enticed by false teaching (14-15).
 2. The problems of the Church at Thyatira.
 - a. It was tolerating false teaching (20).
 - b. It was being led into immoral behavior (20).
 3. The Lord's “solution” to their problems.
 - a. Repent (16) and turn from false teaching.
 - b. Hold on and remain faithful (25).
 4. What “problems” confront our church?
 5. What would the Lord say to us?

Challenge Hold on to the truth and you'll avoid some big problems.

Two Churches: Dead or Alive?

REVELATION 3:1-13

Key Thought Jesus judges churches not on appearances but on faithfulness.

Overview The church in Sardis (1-6) had “a reputation of being alive” (1). Though it had everything going for it, Jesus considered it dead (1b) because its members weren’t fully obeying the basic teachings of the gospel (2-3). Without that, Jesus says to them, “you are not completely obeying God” (2, CEV). The church in Philadelphia, on the other hand, received only kudos (7-13). Like the church at Smyrna, it didn’t look successful; they were weak and facing opposition (8-9). But they got the main things right; Jesus says, “You obeyed my word and did not deny me” (8, NLT).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Sardis: only apparently alive.
 - a. Probably a busy, active church (1).
 - b. Had a reputation for being “alive” (1).
 - c. But wasn’t completely obeying Jesus’ teaching (2-3).
 - d. So Jesus considered the church “dead.”
 2. Philadelphia: only apparently dead.
 - a. Probably small, “weak” church appearing “dead” to many (8).
 - b. Facing opposition (8-9).
 - c. But had been faithfully obedient to Jesus’ teachings.
 - d. So Jesus considered the church “alive.”
 3. Appearances can be deceiving.
 - a. Even “dead” churches can have people who are “alive” (4).
 - b. Jesus judges churches differently than we do (1 Sam. 16:7).

Challenge Jesus wants your church— not dead but alive!

The Lukewarm Church

REVELATION 3:14-22

Key Thought A lukewarm, passionless relationship is offensive to Jesus.

Overview No one would ever accuse the church in Laodicea (14-22) of being religious extremists; they were lukewarm for God, and that really bothered Jesus (15-16). Their wealth had dulled their passion for the things of God (17). It's impossible to love both God and money (Matt. 6:24). There are two other ideas in this passage worth pondering. The first is the connection between discipline and love (19). God's discipline is often a way to get us to repent, as Jesus makes clear (19b). The second is a word picture that communicates how much Jesus wants to be with us (20).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The "passionless" Laodiceans.
 - a. Had lost their passion for God ("lukewarm") (15).
 - b. "Blinded" and dulled by their wealth (17; Matt. 6:24).
 - c. They were offensive to Jesus (15).
 2. They could recover their passion.
 - a. Put God's priorities first (Matt. 6:33).
 - b. Accept God's loving discipline (19; Heb. 12:5-11).
 - c. Repent (19).
 - d. Accept Christ's invitation to close fellowship (20).
 3. The Laodiceans are a challenge to us.
 - a. To examine our passion for Christ.
 - b. To set our priorities by Christ's.
 - c. To accept the invitation of Christ.

Challenge If your relationship with Christ is "lukewarm," start now to recover the passion.

He's Coming Back

ACTS 1:1-11

Key Thought The Bible and the Holy Spirit help us understand Jesus correctly.

Overview After all the “convincing proofs” (3) the disciples witnessed, they still hadn’t grasped the truth about Jesus. They still assumed he was Israel’s national hero (6). One of the best ways to get a true picture of Jesus is to read what the Bible says about him. Another is to rely on the Holy Spirit. Jesus taught that the Holy Spirit would help his disciples understand the truth of the gospel after his death, resurrection and ascension (John 16:13). And two angels announce the great sequel. Jesus “will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” (11).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Everyone has assumptions about Jesus.
 - a. Some are right and some are wrong (give examples).
 - b. What are common assumptions about Jesus today?
 2. Even the disciples had some wrong assumptions.
 - a. In spite of many “convincing proofs” (3).
 - b. They still assumed he’d be Israel’s political “Messiah” (6).
 3. There is a way to “get it right” about Jesus.
 - a. Read the Bible carefully and prayerfully (Luke 24:25-27).
 - b. Rely on the Holy Spirit (8; John 16:13).
 4. One “assumption” we can be sure of.
 - a. Jesus will return (11). That’s the greatest sequel ever!

Challenge Check your assumptions about Jesus with the Bible and be sure to “get it right.”

The Lord's Return

1 THESSALONIANS 4:13—5:11

Key Thought We can't know when Jesus will return so we must stay ready.

Overview Paul gives the Thessalonians two practical teachings to help them maintain a balanced understanding of the Second Coming. First they shouldn't spend time trying to nail down the exact "times and dates" (5:1); only God knows when it will happen (Matt. 24:36). If we're not prepared, Jesus' return will take us by surprise (5:2). The second thing Paul teaches is that they should spend time trying to live for God in the present (5:4-8). We'll always be curious about the Second Coming. But Paul reminds us that the most important thing to know is that we are ready for it.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Second Coming: then.
 - a. It will be sudden ("a thief in the night") (5:2).
 - b. Christ will raise the dead first (16).
 - c. All believers will live with Christ forever (17).
 2. The Second Coming: now.
 - a. Don't speculate about "times and dates" (5:1).
 - i. Only God knows when it will be (Matt. 24:36).
 - b. Do live for God today (5:4-8).
 - c. Keep watch, keep alert, be ready (Matt. 24:42, 44).
 3. What does it mean to "keep watch," "be ready"?
 - a. Give practical examples.

Challenge Are you ready for Jesus to return? Keep ready! Stay alert!

Don't Be Deceived

2 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Key Thought We needn't worry about the Second Coming. God is in control.

Overview Some people were sensationalizing the Second Coming, or simply spreading misinformation about it (2). As a result, many believers worried they had been left behind (2b). Paul says "don't let anyone deceive you" (3), and reminds them that when Jesus returns, his followers will be with him (1). And Paul gives us some new information; the trigger events will be some kind of "rebellion" and the appearance of "the man of lawlessness" (3). But we shouldn't become "unsettled or alarmed" (2). God will let things get worse before he steps in to fix it once and for all.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The Second Coming: There's a lot of confusion about it.
 - a. Sensationalism and misinformation abound (2).
 - b. People have worries and fears (2b).
 - c. People could be deceived (3).
 2. There's some vital information about it.
 - a. There are "trigger events" to precede it.
 - i. Some kind of rebellion.
 - ii. The appearance of the "Man of Lawlessness" (Anti-Christ?) (3; Rev. 19:19-21; Mark 13:1-37).
 3. There's reassurance about it, too!
 - a. When Christ returns, we'll know it (1).
 - b. We needn't be alarmed (2) or deceived (3).
 - c. God controls all things for our good (Rom. 8:28-39).

Challenge Don't worry about the Second Coming. God will take care of it—and you.

Waiting for That Day

2 PETER 3:1-18

Key Thought The Bible gives clear responses to skeptics of the Second Coming.

Overview First Century Christians were waiting for the Second Coming but nothing was happening. Skeptics were becoming more vocal with their taunts (4). Peter points to the words of the prophets and the words of Jesus himself (2). He reminds his readers that when God speaks, things happen. And since God's Word says the Second Coming will happen, we can be sure it will (7). Second, God is outside of time (8); he doesn't sit around marking his calendar like we do. What seems like a long delay is actually an opportunity for more people to come to know him (15).

- Sermon Outline**
1. Skeptics and scoffers deny the Second Coming (3).
 - a. Where is this "Second Coming" anyway? (4).
 - b. If it hasn't happened by now... (4).
 2. The biblical response.
 - a. God's Word says it will happen (7).
 - b. What God says, happens (5-8).
 3. The philosophical response.
 - a. God is "outside of time" as we know it (8).
 - b. His "delay" is an example of his grace (9, 15).
 4. Our response.
 - a. To live "holy and godly lives" as we wait (11).

Challenge Jesus is coming back. There's no doubt about it.

A New Beginning

REVELATION 21:1—22:21

Key Thought God will someday end this world and bring in a great new one!

Overview In these last two chapters we discover that God intends to establish “a new heaven and a new earth” (21:1). Satan will be defeated (20:7-10), the curse of sin will be broken (22:3) and God the Father and God the Son will be present with us. “God’s home is now among his people! He will live with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them” (21:3, NLT). For those who belong to Christ, the end of the world is only the beginning of eternal life (Romans 6:23). That’s the heart of the essential Jesus story.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The end of the old.
 - a. The “old” earth and heaven will “pass away” (21:1).
 - i. The sun and moon will be gone (unnecessary) (21:23).
 - b. The curse of sin will be broken (22:3).
 - c. Satan will be defeated (20:7-10).
 2. The beginning of the new.
 - a. A new earth and a new heaven will come (21:1).
 - i. God and “the Lamb” will be the “light” of the new earth (21:23).
 - b. God will be there with us (21:3).
 - c. It will be a “new beginning” for all who are in Christ.

Challenge How does God’s future plan affect the way you live in the present?

The Rich Do-Gooder

MATTHEW 19:16-30

Key Thought Being “good” isn’t good enough to get to heaven. Jesus is the way.

Overview How do I get to heaven? This man thought he had it all figured out: do good things (16, 20). But Jesus challenges what it means to be “good” (17). He then shows that just being good isn’t good enough; to earn your salvation you must be perfect (21). By the end of the conversation Jesus made it clear there were two things preventing this man from gaining eternal life: his attachment to wealth and his belief that salvation could be earned through good works. Jesus affirmed that there is only one to get to heaven: “Follow me” (21, 28).

- Sermon Outline**
1. The path to Heaven: The rich man’s path.
 - a. Do good things (16, 20).
 - b. Hope the good outweighs the bad.
 2. The rich man’s problem.
 - a. Believing he could earn salvation (16).
 - b. Attachment to his wealth (22; Matt. 6:24).
 - c. Many people today think like the rich man.
 3. Jesus’ Answer.
 - a. Being “good” is good (17-19).
 - b. But it’s not “good enough” (21).
 - c. “Come, follow me” (21, 28; John 14:4).
 - d. “I am the way” (John 14:6).

Challenge If you want to get to heaven, you’ve got to do it Jesus’ way.

“You Must Be Born Again”

JOHN 3:1-21

Key Thought Whatever our church background, we must all be “born again.”

Overview In spite of his high position (1) and religious knowledge (10), Nicodemus was outside of God’s Kingdom (3, 5). But what exactly does it mean to be “born again”? Jesus defined being “born again” as believing that he was the Son of God who died on the Cross to save humankind from sin (14-18) There’s no evidence here that Nicodemus accepted Jesus’ message. But later Nicodemus defended Jesus (John 7:50-51) and publicly identified himself as a follower of Christ (John 19:38-42). No matter how it happens or how long it takes, the bottom line is: you must be born again.

- Sermon Outline**
1. Nicodemus: his life before Jesus:
 - a. High position in the faith community (1).
 - b. Significant religious training and knowledge (10).
 - c. Still outside God’s kingdom (3).
 - d. His situation is similar to that of many people today.
 2. Jesus’ challenge to Nicodemus.
 - a. Be born again (3).
 - b. Believe (14-18).
 3. The change in Nicodemus.
 - a. He later defended Jesus (John 7:50-51).
 - b. He later identified with Jesus (John 19:38-42).

Challenge It’s still the bottom line: you must be born again.

Living Water

JOHN 4:1-42

Key Thought Jesus offers relief from your burden of sin and shame.

Overview This woman was burdened with sin and shame. First, she was a Samaritan, a group of people who were ostracized by the Jews (9). Next, she was a woman; many at that time, including even the disciples, would have considered her a second class citizen (27). Finally, her sinful life had produced a series of broken relationships (17-18). Then, Jesus changed her life forever. First he revealed that he was the source of “living water” (10, 13-14). Next he told her that soon, all people could have a relationship with God (23-24) because God’s promised Messiah had arrived.

- Sermon Outline**
1. The burden of shame.
 - a. The Samaritan woman was ostracized by Jews (9).
 - b. The Samaritan woman was “second class” (27).
 - c. The Samaritan woman’s life was characterized by sin and broken relationships (17-8).
 - d. What “burdens of sin and shame” are you carrying?
 2. The burden lifter.
 - a. Jesus offered her “living water” (10, 13-14).
 - b. Jesus offered her a relationship with God (23-26).
 3. The hope of for all with that burden.
 - a. Jesus offers that same gift to all (Matt. 11:28).
 - b. Just accept him as the Samaritan woman did (42).

Challenge Give Jesus your sin and shame. He’s your “burden lifter.”

Seeing the Light

ACTS 9:1-19

Key Thought Jesus can take our anger with him and turn it around for good.

Overview Saul was an angry young man (Acts 7:58). He hated Christians (1) and tracked them down to throw them into prison (2). But Saul's vendetta raises an interesting question: Why does Jesus make some people so mad? For some it has to do with their unwillingness to give up a particular lifestyle. Others feel they've been betrayed by a Christian loved one. Still others can't accept Jesus' claim to be the only way to God (John 14:6). But when Saul literally "saw the light" it burned off all his anger. That's true for us as well.

- Sermon Outline**
1. People get angry with Jesus:
 - a. Because he challenges their sin and sinfulness (John 4:17-18, 8:11).
 - b. Because he claims to be "the way" to God (John 14:6).
 - c. Because his followers evoke hostility (1-2).
 2. That anger can turn to good.
 - a. If you meet Jesus (as Paul did) (3) and let him take your anger away.
 - b. Get the support of other Christians (17-19, 27).
 - c. Let God use you (9:20).
 3. Examine your anger with Jesus.
 - a. Where does it come from?
 - b. What will you do to turn it to good?
 - c. How will you let God use you?

Challenge Don't let anger with Jesus get the best of you. Turn it to good—and to God.

The Essential Jesus Challenge

LUKE 9:18-27

Key Thought Everyone has to decide one vital question: “Who is Jesus to me?”

Overview As a result of Jesus’ preaching, parables and miracles, everyone is talking about him. So Jesus asks, “Who do the crowds say that I am?” (18). They could simply repeat what they’ve heard from others, which is exactly what the disciples did (19). But Jesus presses the point; “Who do you say that I am?” (20). And it is Peter who rises to the challenge, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (20; Matt. 16:16). The disciples still had a lot to learn about Jesus, but they had crossed a threshold in their relationship with Jesus.

- Sermon Outline**
1. What do “the crowds” today say about Jesus?
 - a. He was a wise teacher.
 - b. He was a great moral leader and example.
 - c. He was crazy.
 - d. He’s irrelevant (and dead).
 - e. Others?
 2. What does the Bible say about Jesus?
 - a. He’s the promised Messiah (Psa. 110, 118).
 - b. He’s the promised savior (Mic. 5:1-5; Zech. 12:1-13:9).
 - c. He’s the divine son (Matt. 3:17, 16:16).
 - d. He’s the eternal God (John 1:1-14; Col. 1:15-20).
 - e. He’s the sacrifice for our sin (John 1:29; 1 Pet. 1:24; Heb. 9:28).
 - f. He’s the way to life with God (John 14:6).
 3. Who do you say Jesus is?
 - a. Consider carefully what the Bible says.
 - b. Make up your own mind.

Challenge It’s the most important question you’ll ever answer: “Who do you say Jesus is?”

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