



grow. pray. study.

February 9, 2020 “The Power of a Servant”

Scripture: Luke 4:17-21

**Family Activity:** Giving your child ongoing opportunities for dialogue, learning and action around issues of race, class and social justice will help them to become a socially conscious citizen. Practice recognizing and respecting multiple viewpoints day to day. In your home, not everyone has the same favorite dinner, toy or activity, or wants to watch the same movie. Recognize that this is ok! Practice peaceful conflict resolution when things don't go your child's way. Encourage positive dialogue with other children during school or play. Serve others as a family at one or more of Resurrection's Serve Saturdays. Take part in church and community sponsored cultural events. To help your child develop a global mindset, sponsor a Compassion child with whom they can exchange letters to learn about the world through another child's eyes. Interactions with a wide range of people will teach your child that the world is an exciting place, rich with possibilities.

### Devotion to justice foreshadowed in Jesus' birth

**MONDAY 2.10.20 Luke 1:51-53; 2:6-11, 20**

If we believe John's gospel (cf. [John 1:1-3, 14](#)), Jesus embodied the power behind all of the justice work of Israel's prophets (e.g. [Amos 5:24](#)), psalmists (e.g. [Psalm 82:1-4](#)) and wisdom writers (e.g. [Proverbs 31:8-9](#)). So it wasn't surprising that when Mary rejoiced that her child would fulfill God's promise to bring justice to an unjust world, she echoed the song the prophet Samuel's mother sang in [1 Samuel 2:3-5, 8](#). And it made sense that God's messengers announced the birth to lowly “night shift shepherds” \* rather than to the Jerusalem aristocracy, who wouldn't have cared.

- A recent Christmas song said, “This is such a strange way to save the world.” \*\* If you were God, would you have trusted a poor family to parent and protect the Messiah? Would you first call shepherds, among the lowliest outcasts in their society, to worship the newborn child? In what ways do God's values challenge your society's values? Do your personal priorities more closely match God's values or those of the culture around you?
- “Angel” in Greek meant “messenger,” God's messenger. Luke stressed that the shepherds didn't just guess at or figure out the meaning of Jesus' birth. God revealed it to them (“the Lord has revealed to us”—verse 15; “what they had been told” —verse 17; “just as they had been told”—verse 20.) What are some of the main ways God reveals truth to you? What helps you to trust God's revelation, while still using the power of thought and analysis God has given you?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, when you came to earth, you brought into human form your eternal heart of compassion and justice. Keep me growing in making your concerns central in my life. Amen.

\* The phrase is from Pastor Hamilton in *The Journey: A Season of Reflections*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2011, pp. 115-120.

\*\* “Strange Way To Save The World” lyrics by songwriters: Koch, Donald A. / Clark, David Allen / Harris, Mark R. Publisher: Lyrics © Universal Music Publishing Group, found at [https://www.lyricsmania.com/strange\\_way\\_to\\_save\\_the\\_world\\_lyrics\\_4him.html](https://www.lyricsmania.com/strange_way_to_save_the_world_lyrics_4him.html).

## Jesus' devotion to the poor, oppressed and non-Israelites

**TUESDAY 2.11.20 Luke 4:16-28**

Early in Christ's public ministry, he boldly read from the prophet Isaiah's words centuries earlier. He stunned his hometown synagogue, saying (in effect), "God's promised anointed one [Messiah]? It's me." Then he upset and angered his hearers' national pride by pointing out, in verses 25-28, times when God's mercy had reached far beyond Israel's national and ethnic borders. Jesus knew his mission was to totally alter the world's priorities with inclusive good news, healing and liberation.

- After Jesus spoke, his hometown hearers tried to kill him! Scholar N. T. Wright described Jesus' message: "The servant-Messiah has not come to inflict punishment, but to bring the nations God's love and mercy. That was a central theme in Israel's own scriptures, yet...Jesus' claim to be reaching out with healing to all people...was not what most first-century Jews wanted or expected." \* Does it inspire or frustrate you that Jesus loves and invites all people, not just those who are like you religiously, socially, sexually, racially or economically?
- Remember the Vision 2030 goals Resurrection adopted last year? They are our effort to say, in practical terms, how we will live out Jesus' mission. We're still ten years from the target date, and we can't count on someone else to live out these goals. [Click here](http://cor.org/vision2030) (cor.org/vision2030) to review the goals, and ask what God is calling you to do in making these goals a reality. How are you making yourself available now for God to work through you to make the world look more like God's kingdom?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, "good news to the poor," "release to the prisoners," "recovery of sight to the blind," "liberate the oppressed"— you chose those phrases to define your mission. Guide me to the ways you've equipped me to advance that mission. Amen.

\* N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone*. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004, pp. 48-49.)

## Jesus accepted and healed women

**WEDNESDAY 2.12.20 Luke 8:1-3, 41-48**

Mary Magdalene has played a large role in popular fiction about Jesus. So it's a surprise to see how small (yet vital) a role she had in the gospels. Her name was only in Luke 8 before she became one of the first witnesses to Jesus' resurrection, yet it showed why she was so loyal to him. Later in Luke 8, a woman whose disease made her ritually unclean reached out to Jesus. His healing and approval changed her life forever. (C.f. also [Luke 13:10-17](#), where Jesus set free "a daughter of Abraham.")

- Scholar William Barclay noted of [Galatians 3:28](#), "In the Jewish morning prayer, which Paul must all his pre-Christian life have used, the Jew thanks God that 'Thou hast not made me a Gentile, a slave or a woman.' Paul takes that prayer and reverses it." \* The apostle simply put into words the way Jesus lived in cultures based on male supremacy. How did Jesus' example make gender justice a basic (if too often overlooked) part of Christian ethics?
- Pastor Frederick Buechner wrote, "When [Jesus] was born, the whole course of history was changed. That is a fact as hard and blunt as any fact...all the way down the twenty centuries since [Jesus] was born, countless different kinds of people in countless different kinds of ways... have been grasped by him...in this man, there is the power of God to bring light into our darkness, to make us whole, to give a new kind of life to anybody who turns toward him in faith, even to such as you and me." \* Jesus changed these women's lives for good. How has he changed your life? How will you remain open so he can keep changing your life for the better?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, of course men and women are different. But you made it clear that in your eyes they were not of different worth. Lead me beyond any residual gender bias I may have learned along the way. Amen.

\* William Barclay, *Daily Study Bible Series: The Letters to the Galatians and Ephesians (Revised Edition)*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1976, pp. 32-33.

\*\* Frederick Buechner, *The Hungering Dark*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1961, pp. 53-54.

## **Jesus' devotion to outcast lepers (even Samaritans)**

### **THURSDAY 2.13.20 Matthew 8:1-4, Luke 17:11-19**

In Jesus' day, people called any visible skin disease "leprosy." [Leviticus 13-14](#) gave detailed rules and called for isolating anyone with a skin disease to keep it from spreading. Most people feared these sufferers and avoided all contact. It was stunning, even forbidden, when "Jesus reached out his hand, and touched" the man in Matthew 8 and said, "Become clean." Jesus also healed ten "lepers." Some were Israelite, at least one a despised Samaritan, bonded by their shunned and outcast status.

- The desperate isolation lepers faced seemed to have created an atypical group: Jewish lepers mixed with at least one Samaritan. The gospels say Jesus, unlike most Israelites, shunned neither lepers nor Samaritans. How good are you at seeing beyond surface differences? When has someone looked beyond your surface limitations and accepted you anyway? (See the book *Safe People* \* for wise Christian ideas on when and how to protect yourself from unsafe people.)
- Today we know more about leprosy and other skin diseases, so we don't see people literally wearing signs that say "unclean." But social shunning still goes on in 2020, based on race, age, gender, socio-economic or educational level, religion, sexual orientation, disability, and even personal quirks, political beliefs, or looks. Have others ever shunned you? Have you ever shunned someone else? How is God calling you to live up to Jesus' example in touching the leper today?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, I might never favor a law or rule that shut a whole class of people out from services. Help me also to avoid the informal injustice of any kind of social shunning. Amen.

\* Henry Cloud and John Townsend, *Safe People: How to Find Relationships that are Good for You and Avoid Those That Aren't*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995.

## **Jesus cared for Israel's Roman occupiers**

### **FRIDAY 2.14.20 Luke 7:1-10**

Crucifixions were almost routine in Rome's occupied territories. Because we only hear much about Jesus' crucifixion today, we might think the Roman soldiers were all personally hostile to Jesus. In fact, like American troops in Afghanistan or Iraq, they were far from home. They did their work, pleasant or unpleasant. But they were sometimes friendly with the Jewish people, and at times even showed amazing faith in Jesus.

- History says many Romans held Israel's faith in contempt. Yet here was a Roman soldier who financed a synagogue, cared deeply about his servant's well-being, and showed faith in Jesus' healing power. In what ways do you tend to "label" people? How are you growing in your ability to see each human being through God's eyes of love, rather than letting easy group stereotypes determine how you treat people?
- The centurion sensed, more clearly than many people, that space or time did not limit God's power the way they limit ours. How did he apply his own experience as a military authority to help him realize ways Jesus' power might work? Which of your life and work experiences help you better understand and trust God's power?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, the centurion impressed you, not so much because he'd financed the local synagogue as because he showed such faith in your healing power. Help me to live like that Roman soldier. Amen.

### **Jesus' devotion to justice even on the cross**

**SATURDAY 2.15.20 Luke 23:34, 39-43, 47**

Jesus had called his followers to live in bigger ways than anyone had dreamed of, to love their enemies and pray for those who harassed them (cf. [Matthew 5:43-48](#)). He sought forgiveness even for the Roman soldiers who crucified him. Even in extreme pain of body and mind, he was willing and able to share the good news of love and grace. When one of the men crucified with him reached out to Jesus in faith, Jesus promised him eternal life. (Many of us, even the usually gracious ones, tend to discount "deathbed conversions.") And, maybe moved by the startling sound of a crucified man asking God to forgive these executing him, one of the first to recognize Jesus' inclusive spirit was not a Temple theologian, but a Roman centurion directing the crucifixion. (Mark 15:39 related an even stronger statement from the centurion: "Surely this man was the son of God!")

- Luke called the two men crucified with Jesus "criminals." Matthew 27 used a word that could mean "rebels." Some think they were part of Barabbas' gang, since it seems Barabbas was originally to have been crucified instead of Jesus ([Mark 15:7](#)). Yet one of them expressed trust that Jesus would "come into" his kingdom, despite the cross. What is the process by which you have moved (or are moving) to trust Jesus as the just, merciful ruler of the universe and of your life? How can you emulate Jesus by loving your enemies without "stuffing" valid feelings of pain and hurt? Think of one "enemy," personal, corporate or even national, and pray for that person today. (Then plan to do it again tomorrow.)

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, you didn't separate "justice" from "mercy." You lived them as connected facets of God's eternal heart of love. Teach me how to live out justice in ways that uplift and redeem all of the people who need your love. Amen.

### **Prayer Requests** – [cor.org/prayer](http://cor.org/prayer) *Prayers of peace and comfort for:*

The family and friends following the death of Joan Tassi, 10/25/2019

Mary Lusk and family following the death of Charles Burress Lusk (husband), 1/8/2020

Susan Bell and family following the death of Carol McCraner (sister), 1/28/2020

Barry Nelson and family following the death of Mary Nelson (mother), 2/1/2020

Barbara Humphreys and family following the death of Cody Humphreys (son), 2/1/2020

Ruth Benlon and family following the death of Billy Hobbs (cousin), 2/2/2020