

Monday

## Matthew 26:1–16, 47–56, 27:1–10

Not everyone wanted Jesus to be their king. Jesus had enemies who wanted him arrested and killed because he said that he was the Son of God and our Savior.

Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, went to these enemies. He may have asked them something like this, "How much will you pay me if I take you to Jesus when no one is around? Then you can arrest him." They gave Judas a small amount of money, and on Thursday night he led their soldiers to Jesus. They arrested Jesus and took him away. Then Jesus' disciples ran away and left him. How terrible that Judas betrayed Jesus. And how terrible that all his friends ran away.

Then men who arrested Jesus took him to the high priest, who asked Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, God's Son?" Jesus told him, "Yes, I am."

This made the high priest very angry. He shouted to everyone that Jesus had said a terrible thing because he thought that Jesus was just like any other man and was not God's Son. The high priest said Jesus must be killed for saying that he was God's Son. The high priest didn't know that Jesus really is God's Son.

The Roman governor, whose name was Pilate, didn't think Jesus had done anything wrong. But a mob of people yelled to Pilate to have Jesus killed. Pilate was afraid of the mob. So he told his soldiers to let Jesus' enemies kill him.

When he found out that Jesus had been condemned to death, Judas felt very, very sorry for what he had done, and he didn't want the money anymore. He didn't want to have anything to do with causing Jesus to die. Judas didn't trust what Jesus had told him about forgiveness. He never got over his guilt, and he hanged himself.

The truth is that we have all caused Jesus to die. The sins of all us put him on the cross. We all have rejected Jesus at times, or chosen to love something or someone else more than we love Jesus. And eventually, we regret it. But Jesus died for us to show us that he loves us and forgives us, so that we don't have to live with guilt.

We don't take guilt lightly. We take it to the cross.

- **Why did the high priest say that Jesus had to die?**
- **What could you tell a friend who tries to make you believe that Jesus isn't God's Son?**

Our Father in heaven, thank you for Jesus, my Savior, and his love for me. Help me never to turn against him. Amen.

Tuesday  
**1 Kings 21–22**

After the time of good kings in Israel like David and Solomon, there reigned over Israel a wicked king named Ahab. Ahab wanted vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth. He wanted it so much that he sinned, because he selfishly wanted something that belonged to someone else. The vineyard was good for Naboth. Ahab didn't care about Naboth. The sin of wanting something in a wrong way like that is called coveting. Ahab coveted Naboth's vineyard. When Naboth refused to sell it to him, Ahab went to bed upset. He pouted and even refused to get up and eat. His wicked queen, Jezebel, came to him and said, "Get up and eat and be happy. I will get the vineyard for you."

Jezebel wrote letters pretending she was the king. She signed them with his name and sealed them with his seal. She sent the letters to the elders and nobles in Naboth's city. She wrote, "Find two men to accuse Naboth of speaking against God and against the king. Then take Naboth out and stone him." After the men did as Jezebel asked, she said to Ahab, "Go and take your vineyard, for Naboth is dead."

God told the prophet Elijah, "Go and meet Ahab in the vineyard of Naboth and tell him that because he has killed Naboth, dogs will lick up his blood in the same place as they licked the blood of Naboth, and dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

Three years later, Ahab was struck with an arrow in battle and blood ran out of the wound into the chariot. So Ahab died. Later, when they washed out the chariot, dogs came and licked up Ahab's blood as God had foretold. God's words about Jezebel came true as well.

The story of King Ahab and Naboth's vineyard shows how the sin of coveting can lead to still other sins. But Jesus died to pay for all sins, including sins involving coveting.

• **What alone brings true, lasting happiness? Why?**

Dear Lord, forgive me when I am selfish. Help me to be thankful and content with what I have – all that you have given me. You are my Savior, and you give me all I need. You lived, died, and rose again to earn forgiveness for all sins, including sins of coveting. For this I thank and praise you. Amen.

Wednesday  
**John 15:1–17**

Have you ever seen a branch that has been broken off of a tree? What happens to it? It withers up and dies. It can never have any fruit or leaves on it again. The only thing it's good for is burning a fire.

Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches. If you remain in me, you will have much fruit, but apart from me, you can do nothing." Jesus wants us to produce a lot of fruit, a lot of love. Good fruit like being kind, generous, and faithful is what grows out of the lives of Christians who are connected to Jesus. Jesus wants us to love others as he has loved us. When we are focused on and assured of his love for us, then that love is what we show to others.

Can we do that on our own? No way. Jesus is like that tree that we grow off of, and just as the branches must be connected to a tree in order to live and do anything, so also you and I must stay connected to Jesus to live forever and produce the good fruit that God has planted us to grow.

Dear Father, help us to remember that we need to stay connected to Jesus if we are going to live forever and produce the kind of life you want for us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thursday  
**Genesis 4**

Adam and Eve were the first people. They lived holy lives and were at peace with God and with each other. Then they listened to the devil's lies and disobeyed God. This was the first sin, and things were never the same after that. Adam and Eve were no longer holy. They no longer were at peace with God or with each other. But God still loved Adam and Eve, and he promised to send a Savior to take away their sin.

When Eve gave birth to her son Cain, she wondered whether Cain was the promised Savior. Then Eve had another son, Abel. When the boys grew up, Cain raised crops, and Abel herded sheep. Cain became angry because God was not pleased with an offering he made, though God had been pleased with Abel's offering. In jealous anger, one day in the field, Cain killed Abel.

God told Cain that because of his sin, the ground would no longer produce crops abundantly for him, and he would be forced to wander on the earth. But God also showed his mercy by placing a special mark on Cain so that no one would harm him.

The first sin of Adam and Eve was followed by many others, including hatred and murder. All people do wrong things. But God did not want people to remain forever lost in sin. He sent Jesus to earn forgiveness for all sins, including the sins of hatred and murder.

Our Father, give us strength to resist and overcome temptation. Forgive our sins for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Friday  
**Luke 19:28–40**

On the Sunday before Jesus was to die for the sins of the world, he rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. People lined the road to welcome him.

They greeted him as a king would be greeted. Many in the crowd spread their cloaks on the road. Still others got branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The people cheered Jesus on with the words “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Jesus is a king even today. Long after he suffered, died, and rose again to pay for our sins, Jesus rules the entire universe, holding all things together by his almighty power.

- **What words can you think of to describe what a king is like?**
- **How does Jesus fit the description of a king?**
- **How is Jesus different from most kings?**

Lord Jesus, I am glad you are the heavenly king who gave your life for me. Amen.