

Monday

Matthew 4:1-11

When Jesus grew up and became a man, the devil tempted him to sin, just as the devil tempted Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The devil knew that if he could get Jesus to sin, Jesus would not be able to save us.

Jesus went into the wilderness, where he went without food for forty days. During this time, the devil tempted Jesus to prove he is God's Son by turning the stones into bread and eating the bread. But Jesus knew that spiritual matters are more important than physical, and he was not willing to listen to Satan, so he used God's Word to counter the devil's tempting.

Next, the devil took Jesus to the top of the temple. He told Jesus to throw himself down from the temple and not to worry because God's angels would keep him safe. Jesus knew that trusting God does not mean you intentionally put yourself in harm's way. Again, Jesus used God's Word against the devil and did not do what the devil told him to.

Then the devil led Jesus to a high mountain and promised to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if Jesus would bow and worship him. Jesus preferred God's kingdom and eternal life in heaven over all the kingdoms of the world. One more time, Jesus used God's Word against the devil.

Three times the devil tempted Jesus, and three times Jesus resisted him. Jesus did God's will instead of the devil's will. Jesus obeyed and trusted God perfectly in our place in order to save us.

A few years later, Jesus defeated the devil once and for all when he died in our place on the cross. There, Jesus took the punishment we deserve for our sins and all the times we have listened to the devil and loved the world instead of trusting God above all things. Three days after Jesus took our punishment, he rose again from the dead, showing that he has power over death. One day, Jesus will return to raise from the dead all who die trusting him and will grant them and all living believers eternal life in God's kingdom in heaven.

Dear Jesus, thank you for taking our place in the game of life and striking out Satan. We could never win without you. In your name we pray. Amen.

Tuesday
Acts 9:36–43

In the city of Joppa there lived a lady named Tabitha. Everyone who knew her loved her because she was very kind and often did good things for others. She was known especially because of the clothes she made for the widows in the church, who were too poor to buy their own clothes.

Tabitha was kind and loving to others because she knew that Jesus loved her and wanted to share and show his love to others. She was a living example of God's plan for his church – that his followers would love and serve one another in the same way that Jesus had done. So, when Tabitha became sick and died, all of her friends in Joppa were very sad and heartbroken.

Very soon after Tabitha died, her friends heard that a man named Peter was in a nearby city. Peter was one of the first followers of Jesus who were called his disciples. So they went to look for Peter, thinking that maybe he could help. When they found Peter, they asked if he would please come with them back to Joppa. And Peter agreed to go with them.

When he reached the house in Joppa where Tabitha lived, some women took Peter upstairs to the room where Tabitha's body was lying dead on the bed. Many poor widows were there, terribly sad and crying because they loved her so much. They showed Peter the clothing she had made for them.

Then Peter asked the widows to leave the room. He got down on his knees beside Tabitha and prayed to God that he would make her alive again. Peter then turned to Tabitha's body and said, "Tabitha, arise."

She opened her eyes! When she saw Peter, she sat up. Peter gave her his hand and helped her get up. Then Peter called out to the widows and the others who were there. He presented Tabitha to them and showed them that she was alive! How glad they were to see Tabitha alive again – raised up by the power of God! The news about Tabitha spread throughout all of Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord.

God raised Tabitha back to life, which was a great miracle. But an even greater miracle is that through faith in Jesus, God will raise us up to eternal life!

- **How did Tabitha show her love for Jesus?**
- **What made Tabitha come back to life?**
- **What is the greater miracle; that God raised Tabitha back to a temporary life, or that God will raise you to eternal life?**

Close with prayer

Wednesday

Matthew 26:30–46

After Jesus had shared the Last Supper with his disciples, he went with them into a garden called Gethsemane. He took Peter, James, and John aside with him. Jesus began to be very troubled. He said, "My soul is overwhelmed with sadness to the point of death; stay here and keep watch with me." He went away from them about as far as you can throw a stone and fell to the ground.

Jesus knew that suffering and pain would soon be upon him, and he was greatly troubled because of it. Jesus talked to his Father in heaven. He prayed, "Father, all things are possible with you. Will you take away the suffering I will have to go through? Yet, let your will be done."

Returning to Peter, James, and John, he found them asleep. Jesus said, "Watch and pray that you will not fall into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

Jesus went away a second time to pray. When he returned, he found them asleep again. A third time, Jesus went away to pray, saying the same words. Then an angel came from heaven to strengthen Jesus.

Jesus had received the answer to his prayer. His heavenly Father knew what would be best. Jesus knew the suffering, pain, and torment he would have to endure to save us. Willingly, Jesus walked into the dark night. He woke up the sleeping disciples. They arose to meet the soldiers who had come to arrest Jesus.

- **When has God worked things out for good in your life, even when you didn't get what you asked for in prayer?**

Heavenly Father, thank you for sending Jesus to be my Savior. Help me to trust in the way you care for all my needs. Help me to talk to you regularly and often in prayer. Help me to trust in you and in your love and care for me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Thursday

Matthew 27:27–56; Luke 23:32–49; John 19:1–30

After Jesus was arrested, the soldiers of Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor, put a crown of thorns and a purple robe on Jesus to make fun of him and make him suffer. Then Pilate gave in to the people and sentenced Jesus to death. Soldiers led Jesus to Golgotha (Calvary). There, at nine o'clock in the morning, they nailed Jesus to a cross.

Jesus' body suffered much horrible pain. In addition, people taunted and humiliated Jesus. Soldiers mocked him and gambled for his clothes. Offering him sour wine, they said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself." Above his head was posted a sign intended to ridicule him. The sign read, "Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews."

Jesus response? He prayed to his Father in heaven, Jesus prayed not for himself, but rather for his enemies. "Father, forgive them," Jesus said, "for they know not what they are doing."

Two thieves were crucified with Jesus. One asked Jesus to remember him in heaven. Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

Then, looking down from the cross, Jesus saw his mother and the disciple John. Jesus said, "Dear woman, here is your son," and, "Son, here is your mother." From that moment on, John helped take care of Mary as if she were his mother too.

From noon until three o'clock, there was darkness over the land. At about three o'clock, Jesus cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

He said, "I thirst," and so they gave him vinegar to drink. Then Jesus said, "It is finished. Father, into your hands I commend my spirit," and died. A Roman soldier said, "Surely this was the Son of God!"

- **Jesus prayed for forgiveness for the people who were killing him. Is there someone whom you find hard to forgive?**
- **How can remembering that God forgives your sins help you forgive others?**

Dear God, I know that I need your forgiveness. Thank you for sending Jesus to die for my sins and the sins of all people. Help me forgive others, just as you forgive me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Friday

Numbers 21:4–9

While the people of Israel wandered in the desert, they were not always happy. They questioned whether they really wanted to be God's people. God made them wander for forty years. During this time, the people often grumbled against God and Moses. They complained about the food God had given them to eat and about their lack of water. God sent poisonous snakes that bit the people, causing many to die.

When the people confessed their sin, Moses pleaded with God to save them. God told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and place it on a pole. Anyone who trusted God and looked to that bronze snake when bitten were healed and lived knowing that God saves. Later, Jesus compared himself to that bronze snake lifted up on a wooden pole saving all who look to it and trust God's promise, because Jesus knew he would be placed on a wooden cross to save all those who look to that cross and trust God's promise connected with it. Jesus died on the cross so that whoever looked to him in faith as the Savior would live eternally.

God, thank you for your Word. Help us to listen to you and trust you and to live as your people. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.