

Monday
Luke 2:41–52

Mary and Joseph and Jesus made their home in Nazareth. When Jesus was twelve years old, he went with his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast of the Passover. On the return trip, after they had journeyed for a day, Mary and Joseph discovered that Jesus was not with their group of family and friends. Anxiously, Mary and Joseph returned to Jerusalem to look for Jesus.

After three days, they found him in the temple with the teachers of religion. He was listening to them and asking them questions. The teachers were amazed at Jesus' knowledge and understanding of God. Mary asked, "Son, why have you done this? Your father and I have been looking all over for you. We have been very worried."

Jesus said that he was in his Father's house doing his Father's business. Mary and Joseph didn't understand what he meant.

Jesus returned with Mary and Joseph to Nazareth. He obeyed his parents completely, because he is the Son of God and without sin. Jesus grew tall and wise, and he was loved by both God and other people.

- **What are some ways we can show the love of Jesus to our parents?**
- **What are some ways we can show the love of Jesus to older people who are not our parents?**

Thank you, Jesus, for the faithfulness of earlier generations. Help me to find ways to honor them. Amen.

Tuesday
John 6:66–69

Long ago, God sent his Son to earth to save all people from their sins. God named his Son Jesus. Jesus was born in a tiny town called Bethlehem, but he grew up in the home of his parents, Mary and Joseph, in the town of Nazareth. When Jesus was a young man, he gathered around him a group of followers. These followers were called disciples. There were twelve of them, and their names were Peter (or Simon Peter), Andrew (Peter's brother), James and John (the son of Zebedee), Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas (also known as Didymus, which means twin), Matthew (or Levi), James (the son of Alphaeus), Thaddaeus, Sion (the zealot), and Judas (Iscaiot).

Jesus taught many things. Some of the things he taught were hard to understand. Some of those who heard Jesus' teachings turned away. They no longer wanted to follow him. Jesus asked his twelve disciples, "Do you want to go away as well?" Peter, one of the twelve, answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.

By these words, Peter showed that he believed in Jesus as the Son of God and Savior of the world. Today, those who believe in Jesus as Peter did are his disciples too.

- **Most of Jesus's disciples were known by more than one name. What other names do we have because of Jesus? (Christian, child of God, disciple, believer...)**

Close with prayer

Wednesday

Matthew 8:23–27

Jesus was tired. He had healed many people earlier that day. Now he needed to rest. Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and began to sail. Jesus fell asleep. A sudden strong storm did not wake him. Waves crashed over the boat. The disciples were afraid that the boat would tip over and they would die. Jesus just kept on sleeping.

"How can he sleep in this storm?" asked the disciples. They cried, "Wake up, Jesus! We are going to die!" Jesus got up. He looked at the storm and said, "Quiet! Be still." The wind stopped blowing. The waves stopped crashing. Then Jesus asked, "Why are you afraid? Don't you trust God?"

The disciples were afraid again. They asked, "Who is this that even the wind and the waves obey him?" The answer is this: Jesus is God, the king of the world and the king of the universe. The Lord God has all of nature under his control. God made the world, and God continues to take care of us. What a great and awesome God he is.

- **Have you ever felt like things in your life could not get worse? How did Jesus help you through it?**

King Jesus, help us remember that even though bad things happen in our sinful world, we are never outside of your love and care for us. Amen.

Thursday

Matthew 21:1–11

Just a few days before Jesus was to suffer and die for the sins of the world, something very special happened. Jesus rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. The people welcomed Jesus into their city. Honoring Jesus as their king, many people placed their cloaks before him on the road. Others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. As Jesus passed by, the people shouted words of praise: “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” The children shouted just like the grown-ups, “Hosanna to the Son of David!”

Honoring Jesus in this way as a king fulfilled what a prophet had described hundreds of years before. It was the prophet Zechariah who wrote, “Behold, your king comes to you humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Jesus is indeed our king. As his followers, we are members of his kingdom.

- **God is an eternal generous king. What gifts has God given to you?**

Dear Lord, may your word be preached everywhere so your kingdom may come to those who are still outside of it. Help us to live our lives for you, as members of your kingdom. In Jesus' name we pray.
Amen.

Friday

Matthew 26:47–27:66

When Jesus was arrested in the garden of Gethsemane, the soldiers took him to the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas. The high priest asked Jesus if he was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus said, "You have said so." Caiaphas tore his robes in anger. Those assembled spat on Jesus and hit and mocked him.

Early the next morning, the chief priests and elders of the people bound Jesus and led him away to the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, because they did not have the authority to sentence someone to death. Pilate questioned Jesus, asking him whether he was the king of the Jews. Jesus answered by explaining that his kingdom is not of this world.

Pilate saw no reason that Jesus deserved to die. Pilate came up with a plan. Pilate allowed the people to choose whether they wanted to free Jesus or a notorious criminal named Barabbas. But the people chose for Barabbas to be free.

When Pilate asked the people what he should do with Jesus, they shouted back, "Crucify him!" Pilate took water and washed his hands before the people, explaining that he did not want the dirt of the sentencing of this innocent man on himself. Then he had Jesus whipped. The soldiers hurt and mocked Jesus by putting a crown of thorns on his head and placing a purple robe on him. They spat on him and continued to beat him. Finally, they led Jesus away to be crucified.

They nailed him to a cross made from two pieces of wood. Here, Jesus died for your sins and mine. Witnessing Jesus' crucifixion, a Roman centurion exclaimed, "Surely this is the Son of God!" After Jesus had died, a soldier pierced Jesus' side with a spear to make sure he was dead. Then a couple of Jesus' friends got permission to take his body down from the cross. They buried Jesus in a tomb and sealed the doorway with a large stone. But the tomb could not hold Jesus for very long! Soon, Jesus would arise, defeating death, just as he defeated sin and the devil for you and for me. On the cross, Jesus our king, fought our battle against sin and death, and he won!

- **What do you think of when you see the cross?**
- **How can you use a cross to tell others about Jesus?**

King Jesus, what a great and awesome Savior you Are! You suffered and died the death I should have died because of my sins. Forgive me, Lord, for all I have done to cause your cross. Help me to live for you. I ask this in your holy, precious name. Amen.