

In Remembrance of Me



Devotionals by Hugh Brooks
on the last days of the earthly ministry of
Jesus Christ

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of the Earthly Ministry of Jesus Christ

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Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

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PREFACE

The story of the life of Jesus has been investigated, examined, inspected, repeated, rephrased, compared, broken down, analyzed, and scrutinized by thousands of writers from hundreds of religions and sects. Every aspect of the story has been examined under the microscope of both friendly and antagonistic researchers, who are captivated by its impact on the entire world.

It is generally agreed by most of those researchers that the first of the Gospels was not committed to written form until approximately 30 years after Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. During that time, the words of Jesus were passed on orally. They were written down, beginning about 60 A.D., by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, as they remembered them, or as they were recounted by others who knew Jesus, and who listened to him speak.

Writings about Jesus have taken the form of almost every genre of literature, including biography, allegory, anecdote, ballad, poetry, drama, elegy, legend, and novel. However, perhaps the most useful forms have been harmonies and synopses, where His words and activities are recorded in a continuous narrative and side-by-side columns. Dale Ellenburg wrote that: "Gospel harmonies have long been a popular way of studying the life of Jesus. The practice of paralleling the similar texts of the four Gospels goes back to the second century when Tatian composed a harmony in the Syriac language. That effort was soon followed by Ammonius of Alexandria, who was first to arrange the text of the four Gospels in four parallel columns" (1).

The best known, most used, and most quoted, of those works are *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*, by A. T. Robertson, and *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*, by Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry. Robertson revised and refined scholarship by his mentor, John A. Broadus, who developed a form that nearly all modern harmonies have used, and that has become the standard for Biblical scholarship and research related to the life and ministry of Jesus. Thomas and Gundry wrote: "Robertson built upon Broadus's successful endeavor with his 1922 revision by refining, expanding, and updating the work of his former mentor. It is the purpose of this 1988 revision to build upon Robertson's decades of Christian thought that have passed since the popular revision was first published" (5).

This book accepts the grouping and primary textual, geographical, and chronological flow presented subsequently by Thomas and Gundry.

In Remembrance of Me is not intended to be a critical examination of the parallels and the differences of the Gospel narratives, nor a compilation of quotations and borrowed ideas from other authors. That kind of work is exhaustively accomplished in the books cited in this book's bibliography, and in the countless other books and papers about the life of Jesus that they reference. Following Modern Language Association (MLA) guidelines, including those on citing sources and avoiding plagiarism, this book is based on generic knowledge-information the readers could find in any number of general sources because it is commonly known. It is gleaned from a Seminary education, from years of study of Biblical resource material, from the sermons of Pastor Larry Pearson at the First Baptist Church of McIntosh, Florida, and from recent refreshing times of browsing in the library stack rooms of Regent University, the Lutheran Theological Seminary, and the George A. Smathers Library at the University of Florida.

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In Remembrance of Me is made up of devotionals that allude to the events of the second part of the Perean ministry of Jesus--which included the last 47 days of his work on earth. Edersheim says that period: "...which extended from after the Feast of Tabernacles to the week preceding the Last Passover was, so to speak, cut in half by the brief visit of Jesus to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication. Thus, each part of the Perean ministry would last about three months; the first, from about the end of September to December; the second, from that period to the beginning of April. Of these six months we have (with the solitary exception of St. Matthew xii:22-45) no other account than that furnished by St. Luke, although, as usually [sic], the Jerusalem and Judaeon incidents of it are described by St. John. After that, we have the account of His journey to the last Passover, recorded, with more or less detail, in the three Synoptic Gospels" (195).

The parallel framework of Thomas and Gundry, like Edersheim, presents Luke's narrative of the final days of our Lord's earthly ministry as having taken place in His Perean Ministry (149). In the literature, there is enough disagreement as to the exact sequence of events during that time, that there can be no absolute and universally accepted calendar. However, there is enough agreement that the position taken by Thomas and Gundry, and by Edersheim, remains, after all these years, the most widely accepted record of the event timing of our Lord's last days.

In Remembrance of Me is structured to present events from Luke's Perean narrative, which was the closing epoch of the earthly ministry of Jesus (Edersheim 195), as though they occurred in the last 47 days of that period, a time frame equal to the 40 weekdays and 7 Sundays celebrated by many of today's churches as Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday, and leading up to Easter. It is designed as a devotional study for observance of that event, or for any similar time period of preference and interest.

The devotionals are intentionally written in a style that would be appropriate for the structure of a book, or for reading to a CD for individual or radio use. The Scriptures quoted are from the NIV Study Bible, and are used under the general permission of The Zondervan Corporation.

I attribute the historical framework underpinning in these devotionals primarily to the writings of Thomas and Gundry and of Edersheim. I am responsible for all other parts of this work.

Hugh Brooks

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INTRODUCTION

Two major seasons of special worship emphasis are observed by almost all Christian congregations--Christmas and Easter. Other churches also observe Advent, Epiphany, Lent, Holy Week, and/or Pentecost. Among those, the four weeks of Advent are celebrated as preparation for the birth of Christ, and the 40 weekdays of Lent (a number connected with many Biblical events) are considered preparation to observe God's redemption at Easter. During Lent, the emphasis is on prayer, penance, repentance, giving up of different types of food, and charitable deeds. Since Sundays celebrate the resurrection of Jesus, the seven Sundays during Lent (including Easter) are counted as additional to the 40 weekdays.

Dr. A.T. Robertson's book, *A Harmony of the Gospels for Students of the Life of Christ*, is considered the definitive work in establishing times, dates and interrelatedness of activity and teaching in the life of Jesus. Robert L. Thomas and Stanley N. Gundry's *The NIV Harmony of the Gospels*, which builds on Dr. Robertson's calendar, strongly supports the probability that the last 47 days in the earthly ministry of our Lord approximate closely with the later Perea ministry, a time between the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem, and Resurrection morning (Stanley and Gundry, 149). During that time, Jesus withdrew from Jerusalem to Bethany beyond Jordan (Perea), and, except for brief trips, remained there until Holy Week, when he made his final journey to Jerusalem. Most of the activities of Jesus during the Perea ministry are recorded only by Luke (Edersheim 195).

This group of devotionals, titled "In Remembrance of Me," has 47 messages that are related to Luke's outline of the Perea epoch. The last seven devotionals are accompanied by original poetry, written to examine the multiple facets of the emotions our Lord stirred during that week. It has been a deeply enriching spiritual experience for me to deal once again with the things these devotionals describe. As I browsed through critical examinations of Scripture, then read the Scripture itself, I felt as though I walked out of a thunderstorm into a sanctuary. The words of the Living Christ are themselves, alive.

Let me encourage you to take the time to read your Bible, to strengthen its impact by reading related writings, and to discuss it with your family and friends. Even a sharing of these devotionals may be the very means God will use to make the story of the final ministry of Jesus a beginning of eternal life for those about you.

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Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Ash Wednesday. Week 1

"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Hello there, and welcome to this brief study of the last days of the earthly ministry of Jesus Christ. The 47 messages here are each brief and are intended to be devotional thoughts on Bible passages. On each day there will be a passage of Scripture, and a few comments on its meaning.

If your church or Christian tradition observes Lent, these devotionals can be used concurrently with the 47 days of that season...starting on Ash Wednesday. If this isn't an important consideration, or if you receive the devotionals too late for that schedule, begin at any time.

The Scripture for today is 2 Timothy 3:16-17. It's at the top of this page. Please re-read it now. That scripture should leave no doubt as to why we're doing this. You may use other sources to help you understand, but there is no substitute for reading the Word of God.

We'll be using the New International Version of the Bible. And I have two primary beliefs upon which the writing of these devotionals is based:

First...Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He is our only hope for salvation and eternal life.
Second...the Bible is the Word of God. It is without error in the revelation of His truth.

I'm glad you're coming along. It'll be an interesting journey... And I'm praying that the three of us will make it together...you, and I, and Him...

Now...a question. Are you strengthening your own soul by reading God's word daily?

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Thursday. Week 1

"And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life."

I John 5.11-12

Most of what we know about the earthly ministry of Jesus is in the gospels...Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The first three of those are called "Synoptics," because they're so much alike.

But there is a section in Luke that distinguishes that gospel from the others. Chapters 13 to 19 tell us that Jesus taught for a brief time in Perea. Only Luke describes that ministry.

We know from the other gospels that in the time just before he was crucified Jesus attended the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem, preached a while in Judea, then crossed the river Jordan to Perea.

Except for occasional brief trips, he remained in Perea, teaching and healing, until his final journey to the Holy City at the time of the Passover in the spring.

Using the October date of the Feast of Tabernacles as a starting point, it's probable that the events discussed in these devotionals occurred in Perea and Jerusalem during our Lord's last 47 days on this earth.

In that time period, Jesus preached the Kingdom of God to an entire section of Palestine where his message had not been heard...and continued to train his disciples for the time when he would be gone.

Until Easter week we'll concentrate on this Perean ministry...when Jesus taught and re-taught the truth that John recorded as the great hope of mankind... You read it at the top of this devotional..."He who has the Son has life..."

Now...a question. Do you have the Son?

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Friday. Week 1

"Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, 'Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?' He said to them, 'Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from the east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."
 Luke 13.22-30

Our devotional journey begins here. It ends at an empty tomb.

Jesus is in Perea. John the Baptist had preached here, but this was a new place of ministry for Jesus. As He began to teach, someone raised a question...“Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?”

The question had as much to do with Jewish nationalism as with personal redemption. But it's important to remember that Jesus had only a few days left before he would be crucified, and that the most important thing he had to do was direct men and women to a right relationship with God.

His answer, then, was for that purpose. And he established lovingly the foundation for all of his teaching. He said four things about salvation:

1. The door to salvation is narrow. Jesus had said of himself...“I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
2. At some time, the door will be closed.
3. There is no other door.
4. Salvation is available to anyone who will come through the narrow door.

Some things that Jesus taught while he was in Perea are also recorded in the other Gospels. This one is in Matthew 7 as part of the Sermon on the Mount.

It is, of course, probable that He would repeat some important teachings. He said of himself...“I am come that you may have life...and have it to the full.

He wanted everyone to know that.

Now, a question. Is your life full?

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Saturday. Week 1

"At that time some of the Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Luke 13: 31-35

The ministry of Jesus was increasingly effective in Perea. Crowds were gathering. The blind and the lame were being healed. Word was spreading.

All of this came to the attention of Herod Antipas. Herod was Tetrarch of Perea and Galilee...ruler of one-fourth of the Kingdom which had been divided when his father, Herod the Great, had died.

And Herod Antipas had beheaded John the Baptist.

Matthew 14:1 tells us that Herod thought Jesus might be John the Baptist returned to life. In his fear, he sent emissaries to warn Jesus. "Go somewhere else," he said, "or die here."

Tell Herod, Jesus said, I will be here for a while. I have things to do, and I will finish my work. Tell him that I will die in Jerusalem--where prophets die.

With his face set toward Jerusalem, Jesus clothed himself in the Prophet's mantle. In the last week of his life, he would be the perfect Priest, and in his ascension, he would be the perfect King...

But now he was perfect Prophet. The fulfillment of what the Prophet was meant to be. The forth-teller, with the truth of God in His preaching and the love of God in his heart.

"How often," he said to Jerusalem, "have I longed to gather your children as a hen gathers her chicks...but you were not willing."

The Prophet's message is timeless. And this generation must understand what has been true for all generations. The Lord Jesus Christ longs to gather us under his wings.

Now, a question. Are you willing?

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Sunday. Week 2

"At that time some of the Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." He replied, "Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day--for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" Luke 13: 31-35

There are many purposes for reading the Bible. But there is one above all others. The Bible tells us how to be saved.

For the first five Sundays of this study, we will borrow from our Saturday scripture readings to talk very briefly about God's plan of salvation.

Thomas Jefferson said, "The God who gave us life, gave us liberty...at the same time."

And liberty requires that God allow us the privilege of choosing salvation for ourselves.

Jesus wept over Jerusalem because he wanted the people to come to him, "But," he said, "you were not willing."

God does not want anyone to perish. God wants everyone to be saved. And, on the cross, Jesus made it possible.

Eternal life waits on your willingness to accept Him.

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Monday. Week 2

"One Sabbath, when Jesus went to eat in the house of a prominent Pharisee, he was being carefully watched. There in front of him was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus asked the Pharisees and experts in the law, "Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?" But they remained silent. So taking hold of the man he healed him and sent him away. Then he asked them, "If one of you has a son or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day, will you not immediately pull him out?" And they had nothing to say." Luke 14:1-6

There were few days in the ministry of Jesus when he was not closely watched by those who would put an end to His work.

Among those were religious leaders. Pharisees and Sadducees.

The Pharisees were separatists...who considered themselves the custodians of both the written and the oral law. The Sadducees were wealthy, educated men who represented the vested interests of the Jews in Jerusalem. Some of both were on the Sanhedrin, the ruling tribunal of the Jewish Nation.

They saw Jesus as a threat to their power and position.

Luke tells us that one Sabbath day Jesus was invited to the house of a prominent Pharisee.

Suddenly...as if from nowhere...there appeared a man with a deadly, chronic illness. One that, by medical standards of the day, was incurable.

Now according to Jewish Law, no unusual effort was to be expended on the Sabbath. If Jesus dealt with this sick man now, he could be accused by the Pharisees of violating the Holy Day...

Jesus understood the trap. "Is it lawful," he asked, "to heal on the Sabbath?" The hunted became the hunter. The Pharisees would not dare to publicly deny so great a mercy...even on the Sabbath. Jesus healed the sufferer.

The Law of God was never intended to keep us from doing what is right and needful. The Law was put into place...as Paul told us in Galatians...to bring us to Christ. "And," Paul said, "Now that faith has come, we are no longer under the supervision of the Law."

We are under the obligations of love. Those are more difficult than the precepts of the Law. And more rewarding.

Now, a question. Do you have the faith that removes you from the supervision of the law?

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Tuesday. Week 2

"When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable. "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 14:7-11

The lessons of Jesus are astonishingly comprehensive.

At a Pharisee's home, at a banquet, Jesus watched quietly as guests arrived.

Our Lord took the opportunity to teach. When invited to a prestigious event, he cautioned, take the lowest seat available. If your host believes you deserve a better one, he'll move you to it. And, if he thinks other guests are more deserving, at least you won't have to suffer the embarrassment of being asked to move aside for one of them.

That's entirely practical. And, if we learn nothing more than a social skill, reading this passage will have been worth our time.

But Jesus was in his last days. He had much to teach. And he used this occasion to focus on humility.

Humility is a difficult personal characteristic to attain...because by the time we think we've achieved it, we're proud of ourselves for the accomplishment.

Jesus was the perfect example of humility. It's important to understand two great truths about him which made that so:

First, he spent his life concerned about the needs of others, rather than about his own.

Second, he was obedient to the will of God for his life, no matter what the cost. Philippians 2:8 says of Him that "he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

Service...and obedience. Humility. But when we think we have it, we'd probably better remember not to brag about it.

Now, a question. How important do you think you are?

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Wednesday. Week 2

"Then Jesus said to his host, "When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:12-14

More practical advice from Jesus...although it may not seem so on the surface.

When Jesus speaks about taking a lower seat at a banquet and being invited to move up, it's simple to understand the social implications.

When he speaks about inviting the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind to our banquet, instead of friends, relatives, or rich neighbors, it's not quite as easy.

Who invites the social outcasts and the needy to an expensive banquet?

Well...it depends. Jesus said if you invite the socially acceptable...they'll probably host a banquet and invite you...

And, he said, you'll have been repaid.

A banquet for the poor and the needy won't bring an immediate return. However, there will be a return. At the resurrection of the righteous.

The promise of future reward is consistent Biblical teaching. In Heaven, the righteous could receive any or all of five different crowns:

I Corinthians 9:25 tells of a Crown Eternal for personal commitment to the cause of Christ. I Thessalonians 2:19 speaks of a Crown of Rejoicing for winning others to Christ. 2 Timothy 4:8 tells of a Crown of Righteousness, given to those who watch faithfully for the Lord's return. James 1:12 tells of a Crown of Life, for those who persevere in the faith. And I Peter 5:4 speaks of a Crown of Glory...to be given to Christians who serve others and teach them the truth of our Lord.

Few Christians think about rewards. But God promised them, and in His time and in His place they will be given.

What a nice surprise!

Now, a question. Will you receive a crown?

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Thursday. Week 2

"When one of those at the table with him heard this, he said to Jesus, "Blessed is the man who will eat at the feast in the kingdom of God." Jesus replied: "A certain man was preparing a great banquet and invited many guests. At the time of the banquet he sent his servant to tell those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said, 'I have just bought a field, and I must go and see it. Please excuse me.' And another said, 'I have just bought five yoke of oxen, and I'm on my way to try them out. Please excuse me.' Still, another said, 'I just got married, so I can't come.' The servant came back and reported this to his master. Then the owner of the house became angry and ordered his servant, 'Go out quickly into the streets and alleys of the town and bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame.' 'Sir,' the servant said, 'what you ordered has been done, but there is still room.' Then the master told his servant, 'Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in so that my house will be full. I tell you, not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet.'" Luke 14: 15-24

Jesus used social events to teach important truths. At a banquet in a Pharisee's home, he told a parable about Heaven. Jews were familiar with the idea of Heaven as Eternity's banquet feast, and they'd been told by the prophets they were invited.

Jesus said the banquet was ready, and that servants were even at that time urging those who were invited to come on in... But they made excuses and would not respond. Look carefully at those excuses, they cover three broad areas of human concern:

The first concern was the attraction of property and personal possessions...one man wouldn't come because he had bought a field. The second concern was the attention and pleasure related to business and occupation...that man had purchased five yoke of oxen and he wanted to try them. And the third was one of family and social ties...that man had just been married.

These are unavoidable interests. They were for the Jews. They are for people of all religions. But they have a common fault. Each places the present good above the heavenly invitation.

Jesus didn't teach that we are to be unconcerned with things of this world. He taught that our concern with things of this world should be guided and tempered by concern for the eternal.

This parable had a direct historical fulfillment. The invitation to the heavenly banquet went first to the Jews. They refused to come in, and the door opened to everyone, everywhere.

Servants continue to extend the invitation. You've been invited.

Now, a question. Have you replied?

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Friday. Week 2

"Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them he said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters--yes, even his own life--he cannot be my disciple. And anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Luke 14:25-35

The Perean ministry of Jesus was having a profound effect. Large crowds were traveling with him. In those crowds were some who opposed him, some who claimed to be his followers, and some who were only curious.

Jesus needed to establish clearly what it meant to be his disciple. He told two parables. The first was about a builder. Jesus said that a builder who begins a project without calculating the final cost could find himself ridiculed and bankrupt.

The second parable was about warfare. How foolish it would be, Jesus said, to consider going to war against an army twice the size of your own. Better to ask for peace.

Then Jesus said to the crowd--pay attention! Do you want to be one of my followers? Count the cost!

Many of those in his audience would have to abandon home and family to follow him. Many would have to change occupations. Many would have to leave the religion of their ancestors.

The cost of discipleship was more than just an association with other disciples, more than religious affiliation, more than family ties, and more than being honest and sincere.

The cost of discipleship was absolute participation in the work of Jesus! He told us, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple."

Listen to the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:39: "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

Now, a question. Isn't it worth it?

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Saturday. Week 2

"Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable. "Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:1-7

The fifteenth chapter of Luke has in it three parables: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son.

Jesus told these while he was having dinner--a Jewish act of friendship--with tax collectors and sinners. We must understand those two groups.

Taxes were collected for the Roman government by Jewish agents.

These agents defrauded their own people by demanding more than Rome required...and pocketing the difference. They were despised by almost everyone.

Sinner was a term reserved for notoriously evil people and for those who did not wish to follow every letter and every line of the law. They were avoided and condemned by the Pharisees.

The Pharisees were disturbed because Jesus ate with these outcasts. And they said so.

Jesus told of a shepherd and his sheep. If one sheep is lost, he asked, will not the shepherd leave the others and search for the one?

Then, when the one is found, does he not rejoice...and ask neighbors and friends to rejoice with him, because of the one?

"All of Heaven rejoices," Jesus said, "when one sinner repents!"

The "religious" people thought that God's honors should be bestowed on them--not on sinners!

What a contrast between them and the Son of God!

If all of Heaven rejoices with the bringing home of lost sinners, then shouldn't that be our principal Christian interest? The primary purpose of our churches?

Now, a question. Have you been out seeking the lost?

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Sunday. Week 3

"I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." Luke 15:7

Jesus said, "Unless you repent...you...will perish."

Few of us appreciate being told to "stop it." And perhaps that is why acceptance of the need for repentance is such a problem.

But if we equate those two ideas, we have misunderstood repentance.

In the Bible, the word for repent means a change of mind and a turning. But the Bible ultimately presents repentance as a positive response to God's loving call.

And Jesus said that repentance brings joy to the very throne room of Heaven.

There is a turning and a change of mind. But it's away from destruction and toward eternal life.

So the Bible is not so much saying "stop it," as it's saying "turn around and come home."

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Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Monday. Week 3

"Or suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Does she not light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."
Luke 15:8-10

Luke 15 tells us that the Pharisees and the teachers of the law were disturbed about the friendship Jesus had with tax collectors and sinners. He told three parables to help them understand:

The first was about the need of a lost sheep. Then, in the second, Jesus changed the approach and put the focus of need not on that which was lost, but on the loser.

He told of a woman who lost one of ten silver coins. She searched carefully with a light and a broom until the coin was found. Then she, like the Shepherd, called together her friends and asked them to rejoice with her.

In the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus taught about the sinner's need for God.

The parable of the lost coin emphasized God's love for the sinner. Notice, the sheep has feelings of its own, the coin does not. And it was used in this story for that reason. The feeling is on the part of God.

The two parables together create a delightful and meaningful picture. The need of the sinner and the love of God prompt a diligent search. The result is rejoicing both for the sinner who is found and the God who is the finder.

In these parables, the words of Jesus about "joy in Heaven when a sinner repents" take on an added dimension. Now a richer meaning is given to the idea of God as "Father.

God didn't create us and leave us to an uncaring fate. He came searching for us through Jesus.

And He is trying by every means...to teach us that he loves us.

Now, a question. How much do you think God loves you?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Tuesday. Week 3

"Your brother has come...and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound." Luke 15:27

Verses 11-31 of the fifteenth chapter of Luke contain what many believe to be the most beautiful parable Jesus ever told, The Prodigal Son. Please read it right now.

It has everything. There's a loving Father, a son who breaks away and is almost broken, another son who remains at home and who may never have been quite together...

It has a resolution for the problems of the prodigal...and hope for the brother.

But, more than anything else, it has boundless love. Indeed, the suggestion has often been made that this parable should be called "A Father's Love."

In the prodigal we see the tax collectors and sinners, and in the brother, the Pharisees. But the central figure is the Father, who represents our Father in Heaven.

When we've studied the New Testament carefully, we're aware that so much of the whole body of what Jesus taught is woven into this parable.

The Father's love...the riches of Heaven...the freedom to choose...the straying child...the willingness of the son to come home...the joy of the Father...the Heavenly feast...and the concern for the whole family.

We find ourselves rejoicing when the prodigal returns.

Appreciating the Father.

And applauding the parable.

But there is in this story something rarely understood. Look carefully. Jesus has given us a standard by which we may measure the depth of our own Christian experience and commitment.

It's the question of the day.

What do you honestly feel should be the fate of the elder brother?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Wednesday. Week 3

"Jesus told his disciples: "There was a rich man whose manager was accused of wasting his possessions. So he called him in and asked him, 'What is this I hear about you? Give an account of your management, because you cannot be manager any longer.' The manager said to himself, 'What shall I do now? My master is taking away my job. I'm not strong enough to dig, and I'm ashamed to beg-- I know what I'll do so that, when I lose my job here, people will welcome me into their houses.' So he called in each one of his master's debtors. He asked the first, 'How much do you owe my master?' 'Eight hundred gallons of olive oil,' he replied. The manager told him, 'Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it four hundred.' Then he asked the second, 'And how much do you owe?' 'A thousand bushels of wheat,' he replied. He told him, 'Take your bill and make it eight hundred.' The master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly. For the people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light. I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings." Luke 16:1-9

The story that begins the sixteenth chapter of Luke is one of the most unusual in the Bible. It tells of a man who is about to dismiss his manager.

The manager calls in his master's creditors, reduces their indebtedness, and has them pay off smaller amounts than those that were on the books, thus obligating the debtors to himself.

This appears to be dishonest. But, Jesus said, the master commends the manager.

How, then, shall we understand the manager's actions? There are at least two explanations possible:

1. The manager was simply by-passing a "loan charge," one his master had added to circumvent the Jewish law that did not allow the charging of interest. Or,
2. The manager reduced the indebtedness by the amount he had added and was illegally keeping it for himself.

Either reason might have caused a shrewd master to commend the manager because the manager's decision gave him a sympathetic group of associates when he was dismissed from his job.

Historical interpretations have called this manager a Pharisee, a tax collector, Judas Iscariot, and even Satan.

But the manager is everyman. And Jesus is attempting to draw attention to that time when life comes to an end, all goods are taken away, and a new world begins.

What we have in this world may help us gain an eternal advantage. But only if we make those possessions work, as the shrewd manager did, for the benefit of others.

Now, a question. Are you dealing rightly with everyone you know?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thursday. Week 3

"Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much. So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth, who will trust you with true riches. And if you have not been trustworthy with someone else's property, who will give you property of your own? No servant can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money." Luke 16:10-13

On a dark, winter day I stood with a dear friend whose home had just been destroyed by an explosion and by fire. Nothing could be salvaged.

Looking at the debris, he remarked..."I didn't lose a thing I had planned to take to Heaven."

We own nothing. Everything we use is loaned to us. And Jesus wanted us to know that if we are ever to have anything of our own we would have to conduct our lives here as faithful servants.

Then, we may have property in Heaven.

The thought is a paradox. How can we hold property in a spiritual world?

The answer is that we hold spiritual property. Eternal property.

And this very hope constitutes one of the most amazing promises given to the Christian. Listen, from Romans 8:16: "The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs...heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ."

That means that we inherit everything Christ inherits. He is the only begotten Son of God by generation, but we are the children of God by regeneration and adoption. The wealth of Heaven belongs to all of God's children.

Jesus didn't condemn the use of wealth. The wealth of loving friends helped provide for him while he ministered here.

He condemned the misuse of wealth. He said that we have been entrusted with that for which we must answer. And he cautioned us that no one can serve two masters.

We will not take our worldly wealth to Heaven. It should not become our master here.

Now, a question. What are you doing with those material things God has loaned you?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Friday. Week 3

"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it. It is easier for heaven and earth to disappear than for the least stroke of a pen to drop out of the Law. Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery, and the man who marries a divorced woman commits adultery." Luke 16:16-19

The words of Jesus in the New Testament are often just a bare outline of all that He said...and that makes some passages difficult to study.

Luke 16 relates the parable of the unjust steward and that of the rich man and Lazarus. There are three verses between these parables, and they appear so out of place that many scholars think them to be earlier random sayings by the Master that were remembered by Luke and used here.

But there is a connection.

The Pharisees were upset at Jesus for his teaching about money. Jesus spoke directly to them.

Until the time of John the Baptist, he said, the old state of religion remained in force. A new era began with John.

No longer were God's privileges offered exclusively to Israel. The Kingdom of God was being enlarged, the old wall of separation was being removed. See, he said, every man is pressing into the Kingdom.

This doesn't mean that the law is abandoned. Indeed, Jesus uses one law, that on divorce, to show that he maintains an absolute faithfulness to it--not like the Jewish rabbis who allowed a man to treat his wife as property and divorce her for almost any reason.

The Prophet Amos described the true meaning of the law's purpose. "Let justice," he said, "roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream."

Jesus fulfilled the law. No one else could. That's why a new era opened another door for the rest of us. The new era is the Kingdom of God. The new door is a right relationship with him who kept the Law.

Now, a question.

Has your relationship with Jesus brought you into the new era--the Kingdom of God?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Saturday. Week 3

"There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets: let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" Luke 16:19-31

Like the story Jesus told about the Prodigal Son, his story of the Rich Man and Lazarus is a classic in literature, and its revelation of God. Let me request that you take a moment and read it again, slowly and carefully.

Are you astonished? I am, every time I read it.

Nowhere else in all the Bible is there so detailed a picture of the life to come, and of heaven and hell.

Everything about us points to the fact that, sooner or later, we'll die. And everything within us wants to know what happens after death. Jesus told us.

If this story is a parable, it's the only parable Jesus told which names one of the characters. And, if it's a parable, the reality of the life to come is more intense even than the parable describes.

Astonishing. But it need not be frightening. Like a stop sign that prevents disaster at a road intersection, this parable can keep us from the greatest mistake possible in this life. The mistake of not preparing to die.

As a practical matter, each of us should make plans for death. Wills, insurance, burial arrangements...

As the most important matter...we must make plans for eternity. Jesus told us there are two places. We will be in one or the other.

Now, a question. Where are your reservations?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Sunday. Week 4

"Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets: let them listen to them.'" Luke 16:29

In the story that Jesus told about the rich man and Lazarus, the rich man, separated from God, asked that Lazarus be sent to warn his brothers.

The answer he received was startling. "If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead."

Certainly, the return of a dead man would have caused a stir. But soon it would be said that this was an hallucination, or that Lazarus had not been dead.

Because another Lazarus was brought back from the dead by the Lord Jesus just a short time after this, and it made no difference.

The message is very clear. Testimony is already adequate. There is time now to receive it. Nothing else is needed...

Except for immediate response.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Monday. Week 4

"Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin." Luke 17:1-2

Jesus knew that it's impossible to get away from temptation while we remain in this world.

Temptation will come, he said. But the person who encourages it would be better off with a millstone about his neck and cast into the sea.

Jesus spoke of the "little ones." He may have meant young Christians or young children here, although probably he meant both.

In Matthew 18 these same words are used of children. But Jesus had been making new disciples while journeying through Perea, and he may have been thinking here of them.

An individual may feel that his or her actions are no one else's business, but an inconsistent life on the part of one claiming a right relationship with God creates two primary problems:

First, it cannot help but bring dishonor not only to the person responsible and to that person's witness, but dishonor also to the very nature of what is believed about God himself.

Second, little children or individuals not mature in the faith will tend to follow what they see in the lives of older, more experienced leaders.

We do not live our lives in a vacuum. Others are watching us. And if we lead them astray, the punishment cannot be too severe.

Now, a question. Are you watching yourself?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Tuesday. Week 4

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him."

Luke 17:3-4

The teachings of Jesus recorded in the first part of Luke 17 are addressed to his disciples. They needed to learn how to live the life of faith, for they were soon to have responsibility for teaching it to others.

There is an old legend which says that when Jesus ascended to Heaven at the end of his earthly ministry...he was asked by the gatekeeper, "Have you finished your work?" "No," he replied. "Then why have you returned?" "I left the work in the hands of my Disciples." "What if they fail?" "Then I have no other plan."

They would stumble. But they wouldn't fail. Jesus had chosen well, and now he was strengthening the ones he chose.

The Disciples and the Disciples they made were to become a new kind of family, a family to be called a church. And in that new family, they were to have responsibility for each other.

When one would sin, the others were to rebuke him. That would be a heavy obligation, and it could, if subject to pride, undo the very fellowship Jesus wanted to create. Jesus knew that.

And he cautioned that the rebuke of others should always be coupled with forgiveness.

How many times? Seven. Seventy-seven. Seventy times seven. Jesus said it many ways, but the number seven is the Biblical number for perfection. The brother is to be forgiven every time he repents.

Suppose that becomes a little much for us. Well, remember that Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors."

Now, a question. If you aren't willing to forgive, how'd you like to have that petition taken out of your prayers?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Wednesday. Week 4

"The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!"" Luke 17:5

Yesterday our devotional thought was about forgiveness. Today, we begin a series of four discussions about faith.

The imaginations of the Disciples of Jesus were often sent soaring by his miracles and his teachings.

On one of those occasions, they cried, "Lord, increase our faith."

Faith--the central word in the Christian experience. How shall we define it? Let's let the Bible define it for us.

Please open your Bible and read Hebrews 11. This chapter begins with a definition: "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for...and certain of what we do not see."

Too many people emphasize the wrong words in that definition. They concentrate on "hope for", and "what we do not see." But read the statement again carefully. Faith is "being sure" and being "certain."

Now that seems difficult to understand, doesn't it? How can we be sure and certain of the spiritual things we hope for and don't see?

Well, to answer that question we need to go back to the decision that brought us into this Christian business in the first place. The decision to take Christ at his word and surrender our lives and our futures to him.

Then we need to settle in for the duration, continue to commit ourselves to Christ, and let him keep his promise. Listen to it: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."

That'll bring assurance. And certainty. And more assurance and more certainty are the ingredients of greater faith.

Now, a question. Have you allowed your faith to give you a spiritual certainty?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thursday. Week 4

"Jesus replied, 'If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.'" Luke 17:6

Think of a mustard seed. A mustard seed is not the smallest seed known today, but in the time of Jesus it was the smallest being regularly used, and when planted under the right conditions it could grow a bush ten feet tall.

That's quite a change. And Jesus used that marvel to illustrate the power of faith.

The disciples of Jesus asked him to increase their faith. He said there doesn't have to be much of it for it to work miracles.

In yesterday's devotional, I asked you to read, if you had time, the eleventh chapter of Hebrews. Now I'm not going to ask you today to read all the Old Testament stories about the people who are mentioned in that chapter. I'll save that request for another series. But I'd like to tell you something you'll find when you do read those stories...

You'll find that all of these were very ordinary people. You'll find that they had their faults, their doubts, and their fears. But you'll find that they were very much like you and me.

Yet they changed the world.

With faith. Faith only the size of a grain of mustard seed. And the Disciples who first heard Jesus use this illustration were to continue that change.

They, too, were like us. With faults and doubts and fears. But they had faith. Just a little faith.

Now don't lose the forest because of the bush. Jesus wasn't saying that the purpose of faith is only to let us perform sleight-of-hand magic, like casting a mulberry tree into the ocean.

He was saying that a little faith will let us change the world.

Now, a question. Have you thought about what your "little" faith can do?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Friday. Week 4

"Suppose one of you had a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Would he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat?' Would he not rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that, you may eat and drink?' Would he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'" Luke 17:7-10

In the 17th chapter of Luke, Jesus talked to his Disciples of example and forgiveness. Then, in three vivid parables, he spoke to them of faith.

The first of those illustrated the power of faith. The second taught patience and humility regarding faith.

The disciples were anxious to receive everything faith could provide. They wanted a faith that would exclude all uncertainty and doubt. Immediately.

And doesn't that sound like something we'd like to have?

Jesus told them about a master and his servants. The point of the story was that it is the work of servants to serve.

The disciples were looking for the crown of labor before their work was done--for the wreath of the conqueror before they fought the battle.

The parable was to teach them that they were not to expect to accomplish great things by an instant, comprehensive faith, but that the service of God is difficult and requires a lifetime commitment.

And it was to teach them that when they have given everything, they have only done their duty. There can be no spirit of complacency and self-satisfaction in the life of a servant.

There are hints here of reward in Heaven. But these are not earned. They are free. Given at the hand of a generous and loving Master.

Patient, unrelenting work in the Kingdom of God--a deep awareness of indebtedness to the Master--a sense of participation in the work and the sacrifice of our Lord...

These will increase faith. Day by day by day by day...

Now, a question. Is your faith increasing every day?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Saturday. Week 4

"Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him--and he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except the foreigner?" Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well." Luke 17:11-19

During the last days of his ministry, Jesus worked, healed, and taught, except for occasional brief trips, in Perea.

At approximately the time he was teaching his disciples about faith, word came that his friend Lazarus had died in Bethany. John's gospel tells us that Jesus returned to Judea and raised Lazarus from the dead.

You should take an "aside" and read that story in John 16. It will help you understand more of the depth of the love of Christ and more of the amazing power of God.

After raising Lazarus, Jesus withdrew again to Perea.

On his way there, Jesus encountered ten lepers who asked him to pity them. He told them to show themselves to the Priest. And, as they went, they were cleansed.

Only one of the ten returned to thank Jesus. And that one, strangely enough, was a Samaritan--one with whom Jews did not associate.

Jesus asked about the other nine, and then said to the Samaritan: "Your faith has made you well." That phrase could also be translated as "your faith has saved you."

It would be consistent with the fact that the Samaritan "threw himself at the feet of Jesus," and consistent with what we know about Jesus, to believe that this leper was both healed and saved.

We don't know about the other nine. We do know, however, that in this circumstance Jesus taught his disciples and all mankind not only about the power of faith but about the power of gratitude.

Now, a question. Have you thanked him today...for your healing?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Sunday. Week 5

"Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you.'" Luke 17:20-21

"The Kingdom of God is within you!"

People of all generations have struggled to understand the wonders of the Kingdom of God. It's impossible to talk about that Kingdom without using terminology that derives from the things we know in this life. Terminology that includes things like streets of gold and gates of pearl.

But the Kingdom of God is more than that. It's something that renews life, that just makes it all over.

Jesus told Nicodemus to be "born again." And when Nicodemus had difficulty understanding that, Jesus said, "Don't let this surprise you. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit."

You can't earn, or buy, or manipulate your way into the Kingdom of God. You have to let the Kingdom come into you.

Through a new birth. Birth of the Spirit.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Monday. Week 5

"Then he said to his disciples, 'The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first, he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.'" Luke 17:22-25

From Luke 17:22 to the end of that chapter, Jesus talks about himself as the "Son of Man."

The term "Son of Man" was used often in the Old Testament to mean simply a human being, just a man. It was used once, however, by Daniel, in a unique sense.

Daniel saw the "Son of Man" as a heavenly figure who in the end of times was to be entrusted by God with authority, glory, and sovereign power.

Jesus called himself the "Son of Man". Sometimes he applied the name to his earthly mission. But frequently, as here in Luke, he used it to tell us that he was the one of whom Daniel had spoken.

There are more than 60 different names and titles used for Jesus in the Bible. Each was significant. But "Son of Man" had two very important meanings:

First, it meant that Jesus considered himself a man. He came into man's world to be one of us, and, as a man, to understand our needs and provide for our redemption.

And second, it meant there would be a new age--an age for which he was the symbol and in which he would rule. That age waited and will wait upon the cross and the era of the church, but it is coming.

"Son of Man" was used outside the Gospels only once in the New Testament. When Stephen was about to be stoned, he said: "I see heaven open, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

He is there. He will return here. Not as a sacrifice, but as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Now, a question. What title for Jesus is most meaningful to you?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Tuesday. Week 5

"Men will tell you, 'There he is!,' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running after them." Luke 17:23

One of God's great blessings on me has been a long, long lifetime (although I'm not nearly as old as my friends of the same age). I have seen and heard many strange and wondrous things, but in the short time in which I have lived these many years, some of the strangest have been the pronouncements that regularly appear in speeches, books, and even sermons, that predict the exact day and time of the return of Christ and the end of the age.

The first time I heard one of those predictions I was an elementary student. I remember the anxiety I felt when I left my home on the day targeted as the world's last by that radio preacher.

I felt--I thought--I hoped--I would be alright. But I stayed almost in a panic. I looked behind every car (I almost said "buggy"), and around every corner, and down every street...

Doing almost exactly what Jesus told us not to do! In Luke 17:23, Jesus said that when someone says "Here he is," or "There he is," we should pay no attention.

And in Mark 13, verses 32-33, Jesus said, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard. Be alert. You do not know when that time will come."

I've made, I think, significant progress since my elementary school days. Radio preachers, and television personalities, and book writers, and Christian friends, and others who try to predict the exact day and the exact hour of the Son of Man's return no longer strike terror in my heart.

A long time of living with Jesus has softened the anxiety. But while I'm grateful that his love and care have freed me from calendar terror, I've remained deeply appreciative and aware of his calm assurance when he told us to "Be on guard. Be alert. You do not know when that time will come."

That caution was an unmitigated blessing. Jesus was saying, "No one knows the date, but make no mistake about it, I'm coming."

I don't look behind buggies or downside streets anymore. Because of faith, my fear is gone. I am, though, trying to stay alert, and on guard...

Not out of apprehension.

But out of expectation.

He's coming!

Now, a question. Are you ready to greet Him?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Wednesday. Week 5

"For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other." Luke 17:24

Jesus is coming.

For the Bible believer, there is no question about that. And, even though the Christian would like to know, the time has not been revealed, and won't be revealed...

But the coming of the Son of Man will be like lightning. Sudden, unexpected, and public.

When the disciples sought persistently for information about that time, Jesus told them everything they *needed* to know.

He said that when he returns there will be eating, drinking, marrying, buying and selling, planting, and building.

Does that sound like now?

Of course, it does. And "that was what the disciples *needed* to know.

Since the days of the New Testament, there has been only one period in history when reasonable men and women should not have expected the end of the age at any moment. That period was from the time Jesus spoke these words until after his death on the cross.

He plainly said, "First the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation."

He suffered. And he was rejected. Since then, the day could have been any day. And that is what we need to know.

One of the great Christians of the 18th century walked to his balcony early every morning and said, "Perhaps today, Lord." And every evening, he said, "Perhaps tonight, Lord."

A right relationship with God through Jesus Christ provides an expectancy. Jesus is coming. Jesus is coming.

Now, a question. Will your relationship with Christ allow you to pray with expectancy, "Perhaps today, Lord."

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thursday. Week 5

"It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left. 'Where, Lord?' they asked. He replied, 'Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather.'" Luke 17:30-37

There are some things Jesus said that we'd rather not think about.

One of those is in our scripture for today. He told us that when the Son of Man returns, those who are ready will be taken to be with him.

And those who are not ready will be left behind.

Christian communities, Christian churches, Christian ministers, and individual Christians differ by how they discuss teachings like this.

For a few, they are every day, every meeting topics. Others never talk about them at all. And some try to explain them away.

No Christian likes to think about this one. No Christian wants anyone to be left out of God's love. But it would be reckless and irresponsible of us to dwell upon the words of Jesus we like and ignore the ones we don't.

It may cost us our friends and loved ones. But it may cost them eternal life!

As a Christian, I'm a lot more comfortable just talking about God's love, and our Lord's sacrifice, and the invitation that Jesus has extended for everyone to come to Him.

But as a Christian, I need also to talk about our Lord's warning. Read it again carefully in verses 34 and 35.

The disciples were astonished by it. They said, "Lord, where will this happen?"

And with a proverb easily understandable, Jesus said to them. "Wherever there are people to whom this applies."

Jesus didn't intend to scare anyone into preparing for the return of the Son of Man.

He just didn't want to let anyone go!

Now, a question. Have you made sure this does not apply to you?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Friday. Week 5

"Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: "In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared about men. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, 'Grant me justice against my adversary.' "For some time he refused. But finally, he said to himself, 'Even though I don't fear God or care about men, yet because his widow keeps bothering me I will see that she gets justice, so that she won't eventually wear me out with her coming!'" And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"
Luke 18:1-8

What would you think if a man who, with money in his pocket, starved to death in a luxurious, abundantly stocked restaurant? Consider...

Christians have available the bounties of God's table. But so many are satisfied with the crumbs that fall to the floor.

Why? Jesus answered. Because they have never captured the power of persistent prayer.

He told a parable about a judge who was unconcerned about others and their opinions. A certain widow kept coming to him for justice.

And she kept coming. And she kept coming...

Until exasperated, he gave her what she wanted.

Now, Jesus said, if an unjust judge will give justice to a helpless widow, for whatever reason, won't God answer prayer for his chosen ones?

Because his people are his children. And it is at this point, perhaps, that Christians lose their way in prayer. Often they consider prayer simply a matter of confession; or a cry of need in a time of unusual trouble; or a ritual of religion.

And they don't remember that prayer is communication with their Father!

A communication Jesus wanted us to keep constant. A shared intimacy of love, and grace, and truth that not only helps us deal with problems and distresses, but helps us grow into the Father's likeness.

Prayer isn't a magic wand that gets us anything the world has to offer. But it's an enchanted resource for helping us prevail over everything the world forces on us.

Now, a question. How much time do you spend in prayer?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Saturday. Week 5

"To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men--robbers, evildoers, adulterers--or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:9-14

Isn't it neat to be a religious person?

To go to church. And to teach Sunday school. And to be a deacon or an elder. And to carry our Bibles (stop me if I go too far, here), and to fast, and to give to the Lord and to the church a full tenth of all we get...(I did it, didn't I...I went too far).

But isn't it neat? Neat that we're not like those other people who don't do these things.

Jesus told us about a man who felt this way. And about another man who didn't... And he said the second man was justified before God. Not the first.

Now that's a trip, isn't it? But there's nothing more basic to the Christian religion than an open, honest, and meaningful confession that we're sinners.

And nothing more needful, having confessed that than to ask God for mercy.

The problem is that when we have once acknowledged that we're sinners, we tend to believe that we're sinners no longer. But there are only two kinds of people in the whole world. Unsaved sinners and saved sinners.

To think that we are in a third category makes us like the first man in our Lord's parable...

The one who was not justified.

And that's a trip. Perhaps we need to remember every day that every breath we take, every sunrise we see, every joy we experience--comes as a gift.

Nothing we do can buy that kind of love and grace. I don't know about you, but tomorrow, in church, I'm going to try to remember to offer up the right prayer...

"God have mercy on me, a sinner."

Now, a question. Do you consider yourself a sinner?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Sunday. Week 6

"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." Luke 18:14

When Jesus told the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector, he said that the tax collector, who confessed that he was a sinner, went home justified.

That's a legal term. It means that someone has been freed from blame--declared by a judge to be guiltless.

A Kentucky mountain man was accused of robbing a hen house. After a lengthy court session, the judge rendered his decision in the lofty language of proper jurisprudence and declared the accused justified.

"I don't understand," the mountain man said to his lawyer. "Does that mean I have to give back the chickens?"

Guilty. But declared guiltless by the Judge. Home free.

That's what God does for us when we repent and believe. That's what salvation is!

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Monday. Week 6

“People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. But Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.”
Luke 18:15-17

Many modern-day churchgoers have become enamored of a beautiful part of the worship service called the “Children’s Sermon.”

The Pastor invites the children to sit with him while he tells them a story.

The scene is unforgettable. Children learning that God loves them at the feet of one entrusted with God’s message.

Can you imagine what it was like when children had the opportunity to sit at the feet of Jesus himself?

What stories they heard. And what love they felt.

And what a comfort to Jesus to have them near. Open, dependent, trusting, sincere... Everything he wants us to be with him. Think about that for a moment--if we could just come, as he asked us to do, as little children, what great things he could do for us, and in us.

All the voices of conflict and doubt and strife would be silenced. We would hear only one--His. And we would individually hear him as though he spoke only to us.

What did he say to the children? What would he say to us?

There may be a way to know. John, who wrote the Gospel of Love which bears his name, and the drama of redemption which is called “Revelation,” and those three beautiful little epistles of John in the closing pages of the New Testament...

That gentle Christian giant, whose character was shaped by sitting almost in the middle of the throngs of children to hear Jesus speak, summed up the message of Christ. Listen...

“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. In this way, love is made complete.”

There’s a real grown-up sermon for children of all ages.

Now, a question. What does Jesus say to you?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Tuesday. Week 6

"A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honor your father and mother.'" "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." When he heard this, he became very sad, because he was a man of great wealth. Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." Those who heard this asked, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus replied, "What is impossible with men is possible with God." Peter said to him, "We have left all we had to follow you!" "I tell you the truth, Jesus said to them, "no one who has left home or wife or brothers or parents or children for the sake of the kingdom of God will fail to receive many times as much in this age and, in the age to come, eternal life." Luke 18:18-30

Sometimes we hear things so startling they keep us awake at night. That may have happened to the rich young ruler who came to ask Jesus about eternal life. Probably he was in the audience when Jesus told of the unjust manager and Lazarus. And he may have seen himself in those stories. He was powerful and rich. Very much like the influential manager, or the rich man in the story with Lazarus.

If he did hear those parables, he wasn't sleeping well. He was concerned that he might be in the position of the two central figures in those stories.

He came to find a way out. And Jesus gave the answer he needed: "Sell everything you have and give to the poor." "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God."

That answer was about more than wealth. It was about anything to which we give our full allegiance and dedicate our lives. And the crowd understood that for the next question they asked was, "Who then can be saved?"

Jesus had answered the ruler. Give up whatever it is that takes God's place in your heart.

Then he answered the crowd. Salvation is of God! Man cannot earn it or buy it. He can only accept it.

It's impossible to read the New Testament without being overwhelmed with that truth. Jesus repeated it again, and again, and again.

To be saved, we must let go... and let God.

Now, a question. Have you let go?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Wednesday. Week 6

"Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled. He will be handed over to the Gentiles. They will mock him, insult him, spit on him, flog him, and kill him. On the third day, he will rise again." The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about." Luke 18:31-34

There was a new intensity.

Jesus "took the Twelve aside and told them specifically what was to happen within the next few days.

And, even though the Disciples didn't understand what Jesus meant, they were to recall these words in just a short time.

And then they were to know.

Jesus said that everything written about the Son of Man would be fulfilled: he would be mocked, insulted, spit upon, flogged, and killed.

And on the third day, he would rise again.

We were not there, and the Bible doesn't record it, but there must have been a clap of thunder!

Two thousand years later, you and I know it all happened just as Jesus said. We know that He arose from the dead, and we know that he is living today!

And we know that all kinds of discussions about the exact words of Jesus, as opposed to the meanings of Jesus, fill the calendars and make up the topics of Christian meetings and personal agendas.

And we know, if we are perceptive, that in all these debates it is a mistake not to listen carefully to HIM, and to believe what HE says.

There were twelve disciples at his feet that day. And twelve opinions.
There are countless disciples in the world this day. And that many opinions.
How much more important then, to know what HE has said.

And, therefore, how much more important to read the Bible for ourselves.
Remember, he also said some things about OUR future.

Now, a question. Do you know what he said about YOUR future?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thursday. Week 6

"As Jesus approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard the crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He called out, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who led the way rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and ordered the man to be brought to him. When he came near, Jesus asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Lord, I want to see," he replied. Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight: your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus, praising God. When all the people saw it, they also praised God."
Luke 18:35-43

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

The cry was plaintive, insistent, desperate. It came from a blind man outside the walls of Jericho.

The crowd had told him Jesus of Nazareth was passing by...Matthew noted that there were two blind men. Mark and Luke remembered the spokesman.

His name was Bartimaeus.

Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem, where just three days later he would enter the city to the roar of an awesome crowd, and plunge himself into the final activities of his ministry.

In just eight days he would die on a cross.

When Bartimaeus cried out, he used our Lord's Messianic title. Jeremiah had said: "The days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely."

The Son of David was here! The Messiah. And Bartimaeus and his friend knew that if they could ever be freed from darkness, it would be through Jesus. He did not fail them.

There is much to be said for the persistence of these sufferers, for without it they would not have been healed. In another devotion, we will try to remember to discuss that.

But for today we can rejoice with these former blind men, who learned with the eyes of the flesh and the spirit what Isaiah had said about the coming of the Son of David: "Then will the eyes of the blind be opened..."

And for today, we can join company with these two, for it was said of them that they "followed Jesus, praising God."

Now, a question. What do you see with the eyes of your spirit?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Friday. Week 6

"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham." Luke 19:1-9

Here is a delightful story that begins the nineteenth chapter of the Gospel of Luke.

The story of Zacchaeus. He was a "chief tax collector." He was wealthy. He was a short little man. And he wanted to see Jesus.

He lived in Jericho. Not the city attacked by Joshua, but a new Jericho built by Herod the Great about two miles south of that location.

Jesus was traveling through the city. Great crowds were with him.

And that was a challenge for a short man. Zacchaeus ran ahead of the crowd and climbed up into a sycamore-fig tree, onto a long, low, spreading branch.

How vivid. We can almost see that little man wrapped around the limb of a tree, and Jesus stopping directly beneath him.

"Zacchaeus, come down immediately," Jesus said, "I must stay at your house today."

Zacchaeus may have been the only person ever to be saved while sliding down a tree trunk.

Whether or not it happened before he hit the ground, it happened soon. This tax collector immediately told Jesus he would make total restitution for his dishonesty.

And Jesus said "Today salvation has come to this house."

Now there have been times in my life when I've been a little short. And times when I've been up a tree. But since the day when I was eleven years old and Jesus came into the house which is my personal life, I've never been out in the cold.

Now, a question. Does Jesus stay at your house?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Saturday. Week 6

"While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: "A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back. But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten.!' He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" Luke 19:11-27

In the teachings of Jesus, there is a separation between salvation and service.

Salvation is God's work. It comes as a gift to anyone willing to receive it.

Service is man's work. God granted each of us some special gifts--talents, skills, possessions--to glorify Him or to help others, and we will give account for their use.

On the evening before his entrance into Jerusalem Jesus touched on that subject again. His disciples expected the Lord to be enthroned in Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of God to appear at once. But Jesus indicated he would leave, and return later as King, and that while he was gone they were to be faithful with their gifts.

Now we are too often inclined to believe that since God has done everything else for us, and since we are all the same in redemption, and since he loves each of his children alike, He will give us all the same recognition when he returns. **JESUS SAID THAT WILL NOT HAPPEN!**

We must distinguish between those who ARE his children and those who are not. He did. He warned that destruction would come to his enemies. But his children, though differentiated by their faithfulness, are still his children. And that is both comforting and challenging. His love for us is so great that he gave his life to provide it. His gifts to us are part of that love, and their use is not a condition of it--but a response to it.

Now, a question. Are you using your gifts for Him, and others?

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Sunday. Week 7

"After Jesus had said this, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. As he approached Bethphage and Bethany at the hill called the Mount of Olives, he sent two of his disciples, saying to them, "Go to the village ahead of you, and as you enter it you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' tell him, 'The Lord needs it.'" Those who were sent ahead went and found it just as he had told them. As they were untying the colt, its owners asked them, "Why are you untying the colt?" They replied, "The Lord needs it." They brought it to Jesus, threw their cloaks on the colt, and put Jesus on it. As he went along, people spread their cloaks on the road. When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices for all the miracles they had seen: "Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!" Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, "Teacher, rebuke your disciples!" "I tell you," he replied, "if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out." As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, "If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring your peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."

Luke 19:28-44

The long road to the cross was coming to an end. It was Sunday morning of Easter week.

From the time Jesus arrived in the Jerusalem area, all of the gospel writers tell the story. Some remembered one thing, some another, and some events are noted by all four.

Our study will follow Luke's account, but many things you know about Easter week, which are recorded in the other Gospels, will be mentioned or assumed in these messages.

You may want to take additional devotional time and read the accounts of this week in Matthew, Mark, and John.

The crowds that had so recently accompanied Jesus moved on to the Holy City while our Lord stopped for the Sabbath, probably in Bethany at the home of Lazarus and Mary and Martha.

On Sunday morning he started toward Jerusalem. Thousands who heard him in Judea and Galilee met him at the gate.

Bible students have found meaningful truth in each of the events of the "Triumphal Entry." The roar of the crowd, the cloaks and the palm branches, the shouting and singing of Hosanna, the fulfillment of prophecy, the march through the city... All of these are exciting considerations.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

But Palm Sunday was primarily a day of grand announcement. And the marquee events would be played out over the next seven days. The King of Kings was here! He would do what could be done only by a King of love.

The excitement increased, and increased, and increased...

"Then," Luke tells us, "When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives, the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices..." HOSANNA!

**Hosanna, Hosanna
Bondage is past
David's Son is here to break the chains that hold us fast
Hosanna, Hosanna
Freedom at last.**

**Gentle, gentle Jesus
Today will be your day
This is all the earthly glory you will own
Hold on to the moment
Till it slip away
Soon the darkness comes without a throne.**

**Son of David, Son of Man
Lamb of God is He
Faithful witness, Truth and Way
Light for all to see
Lion out of Judah's tribe
Great High Priest to be
Cornerstone, Redeemer
King eternally!**

The excitement continued. Throughout the day the crowds followed Jesus--the lame and the blind came, and he healed them.

And all the people joined in a daylong chorus of praise: "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Teacher, rebuke your disciples," the Pharisees demanded. But Jesus replied, "If they keep quiet, the stones will cry out."

And indeed it seemed as though they did. But the day ended quietly. Jesus returned to Bethany.

The Prophet from Nazareth received no crown.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Monday. Week 7

"Then he entered the temple area and began driving out those who were selling. "It is written, he said to them, 'My house will be a house of prayer,' but you have made it 'a den of robbers.' Every day he was teaching at the temple. But the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the leaders among the people were trying to kill him. Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on his words." Luke 19:45-48

After the events of Palm Sunday, Jesus went to Bethany with the Twelve. On Monday morning He returned to the city and the Temple. He entered the "Court of the Gentiles," the outer area where all nations were permitted to worship. And where commerce had desecrated worship's design.

There were thousands of Pilgrims in Jerusalem. Many came planning to buy sacrificial animals from vendors who set up cages in the court of the Gentiles. And, since Pilgrims needed local currency, money changers were there.

Not satisfied with providing a needed service and making a fair profit, these merchants took advantage--and Jesus said that they had made His house a den of robbers.

Then, with unusual fervor, he turned over tables, scattered merchandise, and drove the vendors from the Temple.

Enough! Enough! This is God's house. This is my house.
It shall be called a House of Prayer!

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

**My house shall be called a house of prayer
Where God and man in stillness meet
Make this not a thoroughfare
Bring no deception, no deceit.**

**My house shall be called a house of prayer
Enter here accordingly
Leave your burden, leave your care
Take my peace abundantly.**

**Come into his presence
Kneel at his feet
Harmony so precious
Fellowship complete.**

**Come into his presence
Worship and remain
Meaning, hope, and promise
Purpose once again.**

**Life is given meaning when you kneel in prayer
Come into his presence, find your purpose there.**

Jesus spent the remainder of the day in the Temple--healing the blind and the lame, and sharing a time of worship with the children.

It may be that when Jesus cleansed the temple, he intended that there should be no commerce at all in God's house. Yet his fury appears to be directed not at commerce, but at using God's house to take advantage of others.

And that can be done in many ways. By claiming Christian allegiance and failing to proclaim Christ crucified. By having "Bible Classes" and not teaching the Bible. By taking mission offerings and using them for selfish purposes.

If the Christian Church does not point men and women to Christ, and repentance and faith--someone is taking advantage.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Tuesday. Week 7

"One day as he was teaching the people in the temple courts and preaching the gospel, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, together with the elders, came up to him. "Tell us by what authority you are doing these things," they said. "Who gave you this authority?" He replied, "I will also ask you a question. Tell me, John's baptism--was it from heaven, or from men?" They discussed it among themselves and said, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will ask, 'Why didn't you believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' all the people will stone us, because they are persuaded that John was a prophet.'" So they answered, "We don't know where it was from." Jesus said, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I am doing these things."
 Luke 20:1-8

The background Scripture for our study today is extensive--Luke 20:1-45. We will discuss all of it, but only a part is reproduced here, so let me encourage you to open your Bibles and read the entire passage.

If you are not reading a modern English Bible version, let me recommend once more that you try one. The one I use is the New International Version.

Some people feel that modern translations are not accurate. Actually, they are as accurate as it is possible to be.

King James scholars relied upon the original languages of the Bible--the Old Testament in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek and Aramaic--and they put God's Word into English.

English has changed since 1611. And modern scholars go back to the original languages again, not to the King James Version, and they study recent as well as ancient archaeological discoveries, then they translate into today's English.

And the Bible becomes clearer. Now, having said that...let me express my hope that you are enjoying reading, and being challenged by these passages.

If you took the time to read the entire scripture background for today's devotional, you read how Jesus silenced his critics on three great issues--his authority, taxes, and the nature of life in the resurrection.

And you read where he called himself "Lord" and the "capstone" of time and eternity.

This was Tuesday. Time was short. Calvary was only three days away. Jesus had so much to tell his listeners: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." "All the law and the prophets," he said, "hang on these two commandments."

Amazing. Astonishing. Remarkable. Wondrous.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

The words of a loving Savior for all time, and all people!

What joy and satisfaction it must have been for him to watch their faces as they listened. All ages. The adults. The youth. The children.

Oh yes, the children. Especially the children!

**Can you just imagine, it was Holy week
Crowds of people surging through the street
And in the temple courtyard, such a tender scene
Jesus with the children at his feet.**

**Can you just imagine the wonder in their eyes
As the children listened to their friend
Have you ever wondered what he said to them
Listen now, and try to comprehend.**

**He said believe in me children
And things will be alright
Call and I'll be with you
Morning, noon, and night
Love one another
Walk in the light
Believe in me, children
And things will be alright.**

**Can you just imagine how the world would be
If we had heard the things he had to say
Well listen to me children, they're written in the Book
Read them for yourself without delay.**

**Can you just imagine the changes we will see
When God's Word is treasured once again
And from its holy pages he speaks to us anew
Saying one more time what he said then.
He said believe in me, children!**

Wouldn't you like to have been there listening to him? Hearing his words. Being inspired by his truth?

It's possible. Close your door. Turn off the sounds of the world. Ask God to open your mind and heart. And read that passage again.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Wednesday. Week 7

"Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present."

Luke 22:1-6

For our study today, it may be helpful to rearrange the placement of two scripture passages. Attach the first four verses of Luke 21 to chapter 20. Reason--the remainder of chapter 21 deals with two specific, well-defined themes.

Second, attach the first six verses of chapter 22 to chapter 21. The reason...those verses say that the Passover feast was "approaching," and chapter 22:7 begins the Passover day narrative.

In the first of these passages, Jesus tells a beautiful story about giving and leaves us with a deep respect for a precious and gracious woman who loved God.

In the other, he tells of a man who could have had all the riches of glory...but who sold eternity for thirty silver coins. The price of a slave!

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

**Thirty pieces of silver
Write the receipt on a scroll
Some thought it ransom for Jesus
But Judas was selling his soul.**

**Thirty pieces of silver
Judas, it isn't too late
You can return to the Master
Don't make the gallows your fate.**

**Thirty pieces of silver
Wait, Judas don't go
Thirty pieces of silver
No, Judas! No!**

**Judas, o Judas, you should have known
He would forgive you
He would atone
Judas, or Judas, you knew it well
Jesus or Judas
The choice between Heaven and Hell.**

**Thirty pieces of silver
Destiny in your control
Thirty pieces of silver
What will you take for your soul?**

Between those passages, in Luke 21:5-36, Jesus talked about the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the age.

Those themes are intertwined. In some verses the intent is clear. In others, it's difficult to tell which event is being described.

And it may not help the non-theologian to read interpretations by Bible scholars, for they often disagree.

What, then, to do? Read carefully. Read logically. What Jesus said about the fall of Jerusalem probably happened in 70 AD, when Titus and the Romans leveled the city.

And everything he said about the end of the age WILL happen. "Heaven and earth will pass away," he said, "but my words will never pass away."

It will be an awesome time...

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thursday. Week 7

"Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. and he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Luke 22:7-8, 14-16

The Passover was beginning.

Thursday night was the time for the sacrifice of the lamb and the Passover meal.

When the Children of Israel were in slavery in Egypt, God demanded that Pharaoh allow them to leave. And God sent plague after plague, but Pharaoh refused.

Then God announced one more plague. He would pass through Egypt and take the firstborn Son of every household, but He would protect the Children of Israel if each family would sacrifice a lamb and spread the lamb's blood on the door frame of the house where the lamb was eaten. "Then," said God, "when I see the blood, I will pass over you..."

God kept his promise. And the Passover became Israel's holiest hour. Yet it was just a shadow of what God would do for Israel and all nations through Jesus.

Judas had bargained away his soul on Wednesday evening. He lived in torment through one more day--through one more Passover meal.

When that meal was over, and when he realized that Jesus knew, he was gone. He would bring the priests and the soldiers to arrest Jesus, then slip out into the darkness of forever.

Jesus and the eleven remained in the Upper Room. With his church together, the Master offered a new Passover meal, the bread and the cup.

The bread was his body, broken for them. The cup was his blood, spilled for them. They were to eat the bread, and drink the cup, and remember...

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

**Remember me, Remember me
In everything you do, remember me
Every moment of your day, every step along the way
Never falter, never stray
Remember me.**

**Remember me at dawning
When doubt and fear pursue
Remember how from darkness
Hope emerged anew.**

**Remember me at noon-time
When life is rushed and filled
Remember how in conflict
Hearts were calmed and stilled.**

**Remember me in twilight
When the sky is azure blue
Remember how in silence
Faith and vision grew.**

**Remember me in the journey
When holding to the vine
Remember how the victory comes
Your hand secure in mine.**

**Remember me in communion
When you think of all I said
Remember how I loved you
Take the cup and bread.
Remember me.**

Jesus made the bread and the drink symbols of a covenant, and of eternal protection to everyone who trusts Him. No destruction for those under the blood!

The night was to be a long one. The Garden of Gethsemane, betrayal by Judas, arrest, denial by Peter, beating by the guards...

But he had given us the Lord's supper. And until He returns, it will be for us a precious gathering place to remember Him. See you there...

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Friday. Week 7

"But with loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified, and their shouts prevailed."
Luke 23:23

This was the day he died.

Only slaves, the worst of criminals, and offenders who were not Roman citizens were crucified.

And that was the way Jesus died.

Everything that happened that day has been preserved, not as tragedy, but as victory. Look at those things:

The false accusations and the probing question which would make him incriminate himself, "If you are the Christ, tell us." His answer, "I am."

The duplicity of Pilate and Herod who could find no fault in this man, but who condemned him anyway."

The murderer Barabbas who went free while the Savior died.

The carrying of the cross.

Simon of Cyrene.

The women.

The awful crucifixion.

His prayer, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing."

The repentant thief, and our Lord's promise to him.

The death of Jesus. The centurion's confession.

The burial.

The Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. How are we to understand? Perhaps through the words of the sufferer himself. From the pulpit of his cross, Jesus preached history's most powerful sermon. Seven sentences. The purpose of redemption. The meaning of love. The essence of God!

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

**Father forgive them, they do not know
What they are doing...mercy bestow
Grant them release from sin's undertow
Father forgive them, they do not know.**

**I tell you the truth you will be with me
In Paradise today
Heaven opens, come and see
Your faith has found the way.**

**Dear woman, here is your son
Here is your mother, take her John
Dear mother, this is your son
He will protect you...love her, John!**

**I am thirsty, help me please
The fever burns
Cool my parched and aching lips
Ease this hurt
I have asked for little
Now I am in need
I must gather all my strength
Help me, please.**

**My God, my God why have you forsaken me
You have been my strength and shield in all adversity
We have never been apart throughout eternity
Now when I must suffer through my greatest agony
Why have you forsaken me?**

**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit
Lift me gently, Take me safely
Carry me so tenderly
Beyond this pain
To be with you again.**

**It is finished, I have finished
What I came to do
It is finished, it is finished
Sinner, for you!
This is for you!**

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

That sermon and all of those other things have been lifted by the hand of God to become precious memories for praise and thanksgiving.

Nothing He touched remained as it was. Everything about him, events, circumstances, people--all were changed.

And those who know that look back upon the day he died, not with regret, but with thanksgiving.

For, like the thief whose dying moments were forever captured in a vivid and majestic portrayal of the purpose for the cross, we hear him say to us, "You will be with me."

That's enough.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Saturday. Week 7

"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment." Luke 23:55-56

It was the Sabbath...and it seemed that the world had come apart. The Disciples were in their homes, or the homes of their friends. The body of their Lord was in a tomb.

We can only guess at their thinking. The Eleven. The Women. Lazarus. Bartimaeus. Zacchaeus. Joseph of Arimathea. Nicodemus. His friends.

They spent so much time in his company, listening to his teachings, watching as his compassion took him to the neediest, the most helpless, and feeling the touch of his hand upon their own lives.

And Mary. Especially Mary. Surely she thought of that night when, as a young virgin, the Angel told her she would give birth to a son whose "kingdom will never end."

And surely she remembered the years of growth, and wonder, and love, when Jesus was in her home--the heartache she felt when he left to begin his ministry--the euphoria as the crowds began to follow--and as her son healed the sick and raised the dead. His gentle way with the children.

And surely she remembered the first reports of opposition--the growing resistance--the unkind words and accusations--the tension of the last days.

And the terror of the cross...

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Mary, Mary
Where has Jesus gone
Mary, Mary
Tell us of your son
The quiet, empty Sabbath..a harbinger of doom
The hopes of endless ages imprisoned in a tomb
Mary, Mary
Can you answer soon?

Mary, Mary
What will happen now
Mary, Mary
What will God allow
Days consumed in torment longing for our friend
Dreams of life eternal coming to an end
Mary, Mary
Is it all pretend?

Mary, Mary
Dismal is the day
Mary, Mary
Life in disarray
Faith is clouded, promise gone...empty as before
Left to wander aimlessly a timeless corridor
Mary, Mary
Is there nothing more?

Mary, Mary
Weary and forlorn
Mary, Mary
The sword has pierced and torn
We will hold each other, striving toward the light
Agonizing struggle in this long, repressive night
Mary, Mary
Will it be alright?

They were despondent. His mother and his friends may have hoped that in some future kingdom they would see Jesus again, but none was fully persuaded that he would rise from the dead.

And so, on this long, long Sabbath they waited, preparing themselves for what they felt they would have to face tomorrow.

And God was preparing for all their tomorrows.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

EASTER

"Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, he has risen!" Luke 24:5-6

It was over.

Passion week was over.

Time was over.

Tomorrow would begin eternity!

As Sunday dawned, some of the Disciples started toward the tomb.

But all of the Disciples, everywhere, were aware that the day was unusual.

The air was exhilarating.

The light was brilliant.

The colors were vibrant.

And there was radiant new life!

**It was early Sunday morning at the dawning of the day
As the sunlight broke across the Eastern sky
That the whisper of the wind took on the sound of Jesus' name
The earth began to tremble in reply.**

**For the drama of redemption had begun in Bethlehem
And seemed to end upon a cruel tree
But the grave was standing empty, God had rolled the stone away
Death had lost its sting, the grave its victory.**

**So the universe erupted in everlasting song
He is risen as he said
Every knee shall bow before him when he comes to claim his throne
Jesus Christ is risen from the dead!**

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

**He is risen, He is risen
Eternal cornerstone
He is risen, He is risen
Everlasting song!**

**Now the King of Kings is living, and the wonder lingers still
For the splendor of that day will never end
Every morn since resurrection echoes with the thrill
As the dawning punctuates that grand Amen!**

**He ascended to the Father, but the wind repeats His name
Listen, for his promises are true
One more bright and glorious morning, the Heavens will proclaim
It is finished. He is coming back for you!**

**So the universe continues its everlasting song
Now the future holds no dread
He will gather those who love Him to his eternal throne
He is coming as he said.**

**He is coming, He is coming
Soon to claim his own
He is coming, He is coming
Everlasting song!**

Listen again to the words of the Angel at the door of the open tomb, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!"

Matthew says that "the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples."

Then, Jesus himself appeared. To the women. To Peter. To the Eleven. To more than 500 disciples. To James.

And there were appearances on seven Sundays. The last on the Mount of Olives forty days after the resurrection.

And there was His great commission: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Everlasting Song.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

APPRECIATION

A work of this kind calls on multiple experiences, including time with the Master.

Contributions came from close friends and family who know Jesus and who daily share their witness to his goodness and care.

Many people have influenced this writing, and while it would be impossible to name them all, some should be recognized and personally thanked.

Their Christian commitment and love of the Lord imbue every line of these devotionals. I extend my deep, personal appreciation to them.

They are:

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IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

Devotionals for the 47 Days of Lent

Thirty-three years. Our Lord was on this earth for thirty-three years. During the last three of those years, he established his church, trained disciples, healed the sick, raised the dead, was crucified, and was himself raised. That story is written in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

However, Luke preserves a section of Christ's ministry that is not covered by the other three Gospel writers. His account relates primarily to the last 47 days of Jesus' earthly ministry—40 weekdays and 7 Sundays---the comparable time that many Christians now observe as Lent.

The devotionals in this book are about those crucial 47 days, to be read during Lent or at any time. They chronicle the activity of Jesus and present some devotional thoughts related to all of his Ministry. They are written with the prayer that they will stir life-changing remembrances of Him.

Hugh Brooks

