

Monday

Matthew 7:13-14

Jesus is finishing the famous Sermon on the Mount with a powerful statement, or better yet, a warning! His sermon was peppered with very difficult truths...including the Beatitudes, Christ's fulfillment of the law, and the Golden Rule, not to mention His position on anger, lust, divorce, oaths, even loving your enemies. And Jesus caps it off with His warning about the difficulty of following Him. He warns that it's NOT going to be easy. Some sects of Christianity in the modern era preach a false doctrine called "The Prosperity Gospels," which, in a nutshell, falsely claim that if you accept Jesus Christ, your life will become easy and prosperous...you'll get the big house, the best jobs and you'll always be healthy. Jesus was saying something entirely different. He was pointing out that following Him would be incredibly difficult. In Luke 9:23, Christ even charges followers to "take up [your] cross daily and follow me." His message was hard to hear, and many "believers" turned away. Jesus was preaching truth when he said "...those who find it are few."

Are you prepared for the hardships of following Christ? Are you ready to give up everything to be with the Son of God? As you continue your walk this week, reflect on how Jesus gave everything, so you could have everything...in the Kingdom, not necessarily here on earth!

Tuesday

Read John 11:25

The death of Lazarus was yet another story of hardship falling upon a family of believers. Lazarus, the brother of Mary who famously anointed Jesus with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, died from an illness (the details of his illness are unknown). The family would soon learn that they suffered through the trauma of a death/funeral for one reason, when Jesus later explains, "...so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." (v 4). Christ finally does arrive (4 days later), and He comforts the still grieving family, even crying with them. Martha responds to Jesus by saying "I know that he [Lazarus] will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." (v 24). And Jesus answers with one of the most powerful statements in all of scripture, "...I am the resurrection..." (v25). A veritable

"mic drop" moment (to use modern vernacular). That statement should almost give you the same kind of chill bumps the family must have felt when Lazarus was resurrected and walked out of his own tomb!

Have you truly accepted Christ as your Lord and Savior? Are you able to see through the hardships and pains of this life, knowing that a resurrection is on the way? Christ has overcome death...rejoice in that!!!

Wednesday

Read John 14:6

Here is where it starts getting very difficult for some. Jesus was pointing out the narrowness of the road on which we believers find ourselves. Many in the modern era try to spin a web of deceit that all religions lead to the Kingdom. But Jesus tells us quite the opposite. This verse almost sounds like it's exclusive, not inclusive...and that's exactly what it is...exclusive, very, very exclusive! Jesus was again warning His followers that the ONLY way to the Father was through Jesus. No other world religion or leader can offer this. It's a narrow, one-way street...but it leads to the Kingdom! Google Maps or Waze might be able to give you different routes to reach your earthly destination, but there's only one route to reach your heavenly destination...and that's through Jesus Christ!

This week, if you find yourself using Google Maps or Waze or GPS to find your way, take time to stare at the screen (not while you're driving!) and study the route, and remember the one true route to the Father!

Thursday

Read Acts 4:8-13

Ever get the feeling that we Christians are inching closer and closer towards modern day persecution? Okay, perhaps not the same kind of persecution that the early church endured in the Book of Acts, not yet anyway (especially not in America) but hardship for believers is coming. How will you respond? In this passage, Peter and John find themselves standing before the high priest, rulers, elders and scribes, and they're boldly preaching a message of resurrection through Christ. The Sadducees did not believe in resurrection, so the message was near blasphemy to these elite rulers. So, how did Peter and John have the courage to stand up and testify before the very Council that could

order their deaths? Well, check out this power statement found in v. 8 – “Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit...” You see? When the time comes and you find yourself in a similarly impossible, life-threatening situation, defending the Message, you don’t have to stress about what you’ll say or how you’ll say it. You don’t have to worry or question if you’ll have enough courage to stand or enough boldness to speak or enough intellect to display. Because at that moment, the Holy Spirit will take over along the lines of “Relax. I got this.”

As you near the end of the week, remind yourself that many of your worries do nothing more than cause more worries. So, honestly, there’s nothing to worry about. Shed the weight of worry...if it’s important enough, Christ will carry it for you.

Friday

Please read Acts 4 in preparation for Sunday worship.