

## Walking in Christ's Light

### Daily Prayer Journal

April 5-10, 2010

*Growing our souls is a partnership with Christ.*

*To enable your soul's growth, use this material with Christ as your guide.*

#### Next Week's Sermon

Scripture: Galatians 3:26-29; I Corinthians 12:11-18; Acts 2:31-47

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=galatians+3:26-29](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=galatians+3:26-29))

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+12:11-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+12:11-18))

([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=acts+2:31-47](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=acts+2:31-47))

Theme: Community living

Sermon: "Community, The Great Coincidence"

#### Monday, April 5, 2010

**Read: 1 Peter 3:13-22 (The Message)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+1+pet+3:13-22](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+1+pet+3:13-22))

*If with heart and soul you're doing good, do you think you can be stopped? Even if you suffer for it, you're still better off. Don't give the opposition a second thought. Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. Keep a clear conscience before God so that when people throw mud at you, none of it will stick. They'll end up realizing that they're the ones who need a bath. It's better to suffer for doing good, if that's what God wants, than to be punished for doing bad. That's what Christ did definitively: suffered because of others' sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all—was put to death and then made alive—to bring us to God.*

*He went and proclaimed God's salvation to earlier generations who ended up in the prison of judgment because they wouldn't listen. You know, even though God waited patiently all the days that Noah built his ship, only a few were saved then, eight to be exact—saved from the water by the water. The waters of baptism do that for you, not by washing away dirt from your skin but by presenting you through Jesus' resurrection before God with a clear conscience. Jesus has the last word on everything and everyone, from angels to armies. He's standing right alongside God, and what he says goes.*

**Journal Reflection:** Peter draws an interesting comparison between baptism and God's act to save Noah and his family in the ark. Both involve water and demonstrate God's action to save God's people. The baptism that we practice is symbolic as a demonstration of our faith in God's act which saves us. Symbols, however have a lot of power in our lives because they open up a window to understand and live inside of a new reality. Baptism is a cleansing act that reminds us that God has given us a brand new clean life through Jesus' act of sacrifice, and we can be living that new life now! It is by remembering our baptism and participating in the baptism of others during worship, that we are renewed by God's love in community.

**Prayer:** Thank you God, that you have given us the symbol of Baptism that we might remember the price you paid for us, as your community. Remind us often of the glorious new clean life that you have made available to us.

**Resolve:** I will claim and live a cleansed, baptized life.

#### Tuesday, April 6, 2010

**Read: Acts 2:31-47 (Today's New International Version)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=acts+2:31-47](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=acts+2:31-47))

*Seeing what was to come, he spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the realm of the dead, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,*

*"The Lord said to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet." "*

*"Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah." When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"*

*Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."*

*With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.*

*They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

**Journal Reflection:** Baptism is our free choice in response to God's love for us. "Repent and be baptized" was Peter's instruction to the massive crowds as a first step in a life-long, life-altering decision. "Repent" means to stop in the direction that you are heading and radically alter your life course. Once the masses chose to be baptized, they understood that their life will look completely different than it did in the past. And they were not doing this as individuals alone, but in and as a community. Notice, in the last paragraph, what their community looked like after they were baptized. God's cleansing power was sufficient to change the course of their history as many that day chose a brand new, unrecognizable and unknown life for their future. In the same way, God's power is sufficient to change the course of our future.

**Prayer:** God, I present myself to you as I am. Baptize me, renew me, alter me, change me into whatever is pleasing to you. I know that my life will look different as a result of you changing me, but my trust in You is greater than my concern about the unknown future.

**Resolve:** I will step into the unknown, uncharted, baptized life as a part of God's community.

## Wednesday, April 7, 2010

**Read: John 6:47-58 (The Message)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+6:47-58](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=john+6:47-58))

*"I'm telling you the most solemn and sober truth now: Whoever believes in me has real life, eternal life. I am the Bread of Life. Your ancestors ate the manna bread in the desert and died. But now here is Bread that truly comes down out of heaven. Anyone eating this Bread will not die, ever. I am the Bread—living Bread!—who came down out of heaven. Anyone who eats this Bread will live—and forever! The Bread that I present to the world so that it can eat and live is myself, this flesh-and-blood self." At this, the Jews started fighting among themselves: "How can this man serve up his flesh for a meal?"*

*But Jesus didn't give an inch. "Only insofar as you eat and drink flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, do you have life within you. The one who brings a hearty appetite to this eating and drinking has eternal life and will be fit and ready for the Final Day. My flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. By eating my flesh and drinking my blood you enter into me and I into you. In the same way that the fully alive Father sent me here and I live because of him, so the one who makes a meal of me lives because of me. This is the Bread from heaven. Your ancestors ate bread and later died. Whoever eats this Bread will live always."*

**Journal Reflection:** This seems gruesome for us Westerners. We can miss the symbolism in The Lord's Supper if we don't understand the Jewish culture of sacrifice. The blood from a sacrifice was honored as the life of the animal. If an animal was pure and unblemished, it was through participation in the sacrifice of that animal's flesh and blood that brought life to the people. Jesus used a common Passover meal (which was already a practice around sacrifice) and gave it new meaning for his followers. Rather than an animal, Jesus became the unblemished sacrifice. When we participate in the cup and bread, we are choosing to participate in Jesus' sacrifice and take into our very lives the life blood of Jesus. We choose to allow Jesus to rescue us from our own sinfulness and raise us up forgiven. We step into real life, the way that God intended us to live.

**Prayer:** God, teach me the meaning of sacrifice and the extent that you went to bring us close to you.

**Resolve:** I will be open to hear God leading me to a life focused on Jesus' example.

## Thursday, April 8, 2010

**Read: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (The Message)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+11:23-26](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+11:23-26))

*Let me go over with you again exactly what goes on in the Lord's Supper and why it is so centrally important. I received my instructions from the Master himself and passed them on to you. The Master, Jesus, on the night of his betrayal, took bread. Having given thanks, he broke it and said,*

*This is my body, broken for you. Do this to remember me.*

*After supper, he did the same thing with the cup: This cup is my blood, my new covenant with you.*

*Each time you drink this cup, remember me.*

*What you must solemnly realize is that every time you eat this bread and every time you drink this cup, you reenact in your words and actions the death of the Master. You will be drawn back to this meal again and again until the Master returns. You must never let familiarity breed contempt.*

**Journal Reflection:** Have you ever wondered why the Communion Table is always front and center to the worship space? It is because everything that we do and everything that we are as Christians is found inside our practice of remembering Jesus, symbolized in the Lord's Supper. It is the most central practice in worship for Christians. It speaks of the act of Jesus to redeem and forgive us. It speaks to the fulfillment of all Jewish history and prophesy. It provides a model for us to follow. Spend the day reflecting on all that communion with God means in your life. Just like baptism, this "new" passover meal is practiced giving unity and identity to the Christian community.

**Prayer:** Lord and savior, teach me to be more aligned with you through your Holy Spirit than the world around me that does not have a foundation in you. Help me to understand better the stories that were recorded about your example and sacrifice.

**Resolve:** I will dwell today on what the Lord's Supper means to me.

## Friday, April 9, 2010

**Read: Ephesians 1:15-23 (The Message)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ephesians+1:15-23](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=ephesians+1:15-23))

*That's why, when I heard of the solid trust you have in the Master Jesus and your outpouring of love to all the followers of Jesus, I couldn't stop thanking God for you—every time I prayed, I'd think of you and give thanks. But I do more than thank. I ask—ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory—to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him—endless energy, boundless strength!*

*All this energy issues from Christ: God raised him from death and set him on a throne in deep heaven, in charge of running the universe, everything from galaxies to governments, no name and no power exempt from his rule. And not just for the time being, but forever. He is in charge of it all, has the final word on everything. At the center of all this, Christ rules the church. The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The church is Christ's body, in which he speaks and acts, by which he fills everything with his presence.*

**Journal Reflection:** Reread the passage from Ephesians with the understanding that Paul is not writing to individuals but to a community. It is the community that Paul wants to be "intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally". The "Christian Community", "Body of Christ", and "Church" are referring to the same thing - God's people. Paul says the "world is peripheral to the church." He didn't say this to give the community of believers an ego boost and set them at the center of the world. Rather, God's people are central to God's attention to nurture and grow us to then be agents of transformation in the world around us. What is it that you see God calling your faith community to do in the world?

**Prayer:** God, thank you for the gift of community and the strength that I receive from knowing that I am not alone on this journey of life. You have given us a richness in our diverse church family that I will not take for granted.

**Resolve:** I will listen to God in and as part of God's community of believers.

**Saturday, April 10, 2010**

**Read: 1 Corinthians 12:11-18 (The Message)** ([www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+12:11-18](http://www.biblegateway.com/bible?passage=i+corinthians+12:11-18))

*All these gifts have a common origin, but are handed out one by one by the one Spirit of God. He decides who gets what, and when. You can easily enough see how this kind of thing works by looking no further than your own body. Your body has many parts—limbs, organs, cells—but no matter how many parts you can name, you're still one body. It's exactly the same with Christ. By means of his one Spirit, we all said good-bye to our partial and piecemeal lives. We each used to independently call our own shots, but then we entered into a large and integrated life in which he has the final say in everything. (This is what we proclaimed in word and action when we were baptized.) Each of us is now a part of his resurrection body, refreshed and sustained at one fountain—his Spirit—where we all come to drink. The old labels we once used to identify ourselves—labels like Jew or Greek, slave or free—are no longer useful. We need something larger, more comprehensive.*

*I want you to think about how all this makes you more significant, not less. A body isn't just a single part blown up into something huge. It's all the different-but-similar parts arranged and functioning together. If Foot said, "I'm not elegant like Hand, embellished with rings; I guess I don't belong to this body," would that make it so? If Ear said, "I'm not beautiful like Eye, limpid and expressive; I don't deserve a place on the head," would you want to remove it from the body? If the body was all eye, how could it hear? If all ear, how could it smell? As it is, we see that God has carefully placed each part of the body right where he wanted it.*

**Journal Reflection:** Paul writes to the community of believers in Corinth because they are becoming self centered, fusing and arguing over who has greater gifts, and this is dividing the community. He uses the physical body as an example to make a point about how interdependent and inseparable is the church. He says that all in the community are gifted in specific ways so that all are cared for and all needs are met. Paul gives us a picture of an organic community that needs to depend on all its parts in order to function the way it was designed. How often have you primarily thought of yourself as an individual, separate and distinct from the church community? If you can recognize this way of thinking, set it aside and reread this passage again, what message does it hold for you?

**Prayer:** God, help me to understand more fully what it means to be part of a faith community, and also understand more fully the giftedness that I have to contribute.

**Resolve:** I will commit to be part of God's community.