

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of August 24, 2025

Weekly Prayer

God, as I read your Word today, prepare me for the day ahead – help me be ready, willing, and able to do your kin(g)dom work and build relationships. Amen.

Monday, August 25

Scripture: 1 Samuel 3 (abridged)

The boy Samuel ministered before the Lord under Eli. In those days, the word of the Lord was rare; there were not many visions. One night, Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So, he went and lay down. This happened two more times. Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.’” So, Samuel went and lay down in his place. The Lord came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Observation

We see in the story of Samuel a young man who was living intentionally – learning about God from a mentor. When he hears someone calling him, he’s willing to go right to Eli and see what he needs. Samuel is obedient. But it’s not Eli calling, it’s God. And Eli tells Samuel to respond with willingness and an openness to whatever God may be calling Samuel to.

Application

How would you respond if you were in Samuel’s shoes? What do we learn about Samuel’s character from this story? Samuel understood that he was there to serve – to serve and learn from Eli as his mentor, and to serve God in whatever way he asked. What’s one word or phrase or idea from the story you could carry with you today? Maybe it’s one of these phrases: *“Here I am!”*, *“Speak Lord,”* *“Your servant is listening.”*

Prayer

Here, I am, Lord. It is I, Lord. I have heard you calling in the night. I will go, Lord, if you lead me. I will hold your people in my heart. Amen.

Tuesday, August 26

Scripture: Matthew 9:35-38

Jesus traveled among all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, announcing the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were troubled and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The size of the harvest is bigger than you can imagine, but there are few workers. Therefore, plead with the Lord of the harvest to send out workers for his harvest.”

Observation

Can you imagine what this must have been like for those following Jesus? A crowd is growing. Jesus is healing every disease and sickness – like the man with leprosy, he’s giving people dignity and welcome back into society. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them.

Compassion is different from pity. Compassion requires action – wanting to help relieve suffering. Pity is passive – people are kept at a distance - but compassion requires empathy, understanding, and action.

Application

As you prepare for the day ahead, remember that you are called to action driven by compassion. Jesus says there's plenty of work to do – there always will be – but those willing to do the work are few. And the work isn't only *work*, but it's a heart and mind set on caring, empathizing, and doing something to help another person. How will you approach the work and the people you meet today?

Prayer

God, help me have your eyes for the people I meet today – help me see them as your children and people you love. Help me have compassion on them – and myself – as Jesus modeled for us. Give me strength for a good day's work, and a heart that is ready to listen and learn. Amen.

Wednesday, August 27

Scripture: The Book of Esther (abridged)

Esther is a young Jewish woman living in Persia. She's been raised by her cousin Mordecai. Mordecai works for the king. The king has just had his wife deposed for being disobedient. He decides he wants a new wife, and Mordecai brings Esther as a potential new queen. Esther is chosen from many options and becomes queen; she does not tell the king she is Jewish. One day Mordecai hears that a couple of the king's officers were planning to kill the King. Mordecai told Esther; she told the King and gave credit to Mordecai. The king's advisor is named Haman. He's upset that Mordecai didn't bow to him when he got a promotion. Haman conspires to destroy Mordecai *and all the Jews*. Mordecai says to Esther, "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?" Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish." (Esther 4:14-16) Esther tries to talk to the King by inviting him to have dinner with her, but she is not brave enough to talk to him about the plan to destroy Mordecai and the Jews. So, she invites him to dinner the next night, too. At that next night's dinner, she talks to the King about Haman's plan to destroy her, Mordecai (who saved the King's life), and her family – the Jews. The King has compassion for her and grants her request, elevating Mordecai's position and getting rid of Haman. "Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Xerxes, preeminent among the Jews, and held in high esteem by his many fellow Jews, because he worked for the good of his people and spoke up for the welfare of all the Jews." Esther is obedient, like Samuel, and wants to do things the right way – before the King, and for her family. Because of this, she wins the King's favor, and she saves many lives. The King, ultimately, is compassionate because compassion has been afforded to him. Mordecai and Esther warned him of the assassination plan. Esther was kind and courteous in all of her encounters with the King. Esther was honest and was brave to stand up to a temperamental king. And it makes all the difference.

Observation

Esther is a unique book in scripture, because God is not mentioned by name in its pages. And yet, the presence of God surrounds this story. Knowing what is coming in Esther's story, we can already see God at work. God has given Esther compassion and kindness towards others

around her; God has made her a person whom others trust. These gifts are things that prepare her to lead “in such a time as this.”

Application

The line often quoted from Esther is, “for such a time as this.” What are some things that are unique for you in this time in your life? What opportunities are you able to see? What dreams are you able to pursue because of your current age and stage of life?

Prayer

God, give me eyes to see, ears to hear and a willing heart to do your kin(g)dom-building work in my community today. Amen.

Thursday, August 28

Scripture: Matthew 13:31-33, 17:20

He told another parable to them: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and planted in his field. It’s the smallest of all seeds. But when it’s grown, it’s the largest of all vegetable plants. It becomes a tree so that the birds in the sky come and nest in its branches.” He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast, which a woman took and hid in a bushel of wheat flour until the yeast had worked its way through all the dough.”

“Because you have little faith,” he said. “I assure you that if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this mountain, ‘Go from here to there,’ and it will go. There will be nothing that you can’t do.”

Observation

Jesus’ parables were never just fun stories—they creatively called his hearers to turn around and change their lives to follow him. Using the tiny mustard seed as an illustration, Jesus showed that “the glorious future kingdom was already active in a hidden way in Jesus’ ministry.” And yeast? Jesus shows that just as yeast changes the dough, so too does the kingdom of God transform our lives.

Application

In what ways has your choice to be a citizen of Jesus’ kingdom transformed your life? In what parts of your life is the yeast at work now, leading you to positive change?

Prayer

God, help me to know that you’re at work in all that I do. Remind me of the impact of the mustard seed – small but mighty. Amen.

Friday, August 29

Scripture: Daniel 6 (abridged)

The royal administrators all agreed that the king should issue an edict and enforce the decree that anyone who prays to any god or human being during the next thirty days shall be thrown into the lions’ den. Then they said to the king, “Daniel, who is one of the exiles from Judah, pays no attention to you, Your Majesty, or to the decree you put in writing. He still prays three times a day.” So, they brought Daniel and threw him into the lions’ den. The king said to Daniel, “May your God, whom you serve continually, rescue you!” At the first light of dawn, the king got up and hurried to the lions’ den. When he came near the den, he called to Daniel in an anguished voice, “Daniel, servant of the living God, has your God, whom you serve continually, been able

to rescue you from the lions?” Daniel answered, “May the king live forever! My God sent his angel, and he shut the mouths of the lions. They have not hurt me, because I was found innocent in his sight. Nor have I ever done any wrong before you, Your Majesty.” The king was overjoyed and gave orders to lift Daniel out of the den. And when Daniel was lifted from the den, no wound was found on him, because he had trusted in his God.

Observation

Chapter 6 of Daniel was set after Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians. (Daniel 5 described that, though not in ways that totally match the non-Biblical records historians know.) Again, the story’s main point was not to document details of Persian governance. It showed Daniel’s refusal to give up his loyalty to God even as he worked with (and faced harassment from) those who didn’t share his faith.

Application

A pit of lions”? “The Aramaic word used means ‘pit.’ The pit envisaged in this story seems to be an underground cavity with a relatively small hole at the top that could be covered by a large stone.... The Persian kings used some horrible forms of execution. The king valued Daniel yet foolishly signed the law his aides offered. What are some forms of pressure today that might feel at least a bit like someone throwing you into a pit of lions for sticking to your faith commitments?

Prayer

Dear God, the memory of Daniel’s unflinching allegiance to you has sustained your people through many hard times over the centuries. Help it to strengthen me to be faithful, whatever kind of “lions” I may face. Amen.

Saturday, August 30

Scripture: Luke 4:31-37

Jesus went down to the city of Capernaum in Galilee and taught the people each Sabbath. They were amazed by his teaching because he delivered his message with authority. A man in the synagogue had the spirit of an unclean demon. He screamed, “Hey! What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are. You are the holy one from God.” “Silence!” Jesus said, speaking harshly to the demon. “Come out of him!” The demon threw the man down before them, then came out of him without harming him. They were all shaken and said to each other, “What kind of word is this, that he can command unclean spirits with authority and power, and they leave?” Reports about him spread everywhere in the surrounding region.

Observation

Never discouraged by the previous day, Jesus’ ministry begins at a fast pace. He moves on to Capernaum, about 40 miles from Nazareth. He immediately begins to heal those around him. And even the demons are quick to recognize Christ’s authority.

Application

Jesus frequently heals people physically. But Christ also brings us healing in other ways, too: in our spirits, our relationships, our thoughts and feelings. What areas of your life might you offer up to Christ today? How might you ask Jesus to bring healing and wholeness to your life?

Prayer

Healing Christ, you know the places in my life -- my heart, body, and mind -- that are in need of

healing today. Make your tender voice, your gentle touch, your everlasting love, bring healing and wholeness to my life. Amen.