



SHIFT

A Lenten Study Guide

SHIFT

From Being Served To Serving



As we begin to look at, think about and get in touch with this Lenten season we begin by looking at what it means to make some shifts in our lives. These shifts will be ones that take us from looking more inward at our needs to looking more outward to what God is calling us to be about as we seek to live out our relationship with Him and with others. These will be shifts that will assist us in our personal faith journey.

Today we come to look at and consider the shift from being served to that of serving. Our scripture reference is found in the 13th chapter of the Gospel of John.

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love. 2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. 3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. 6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean. 12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. - John 13:1-17 NIV



1. In preparation for the Passover meal it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of the guests gathering for the meal. This particular night there was no such servant as they arrived. John tells us that Jesus assumed the role. **3 Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; 4 so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. 5 After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him.**

- Why do you suppose none of the disciples even considered assuming the servants role of washing feet?
- How often do we miss opportunities to serve because we feel that we are the ones to be served?
- How often do we look past opportunities to serve simply because we either feel or assume it is someone else's responsibility?
- What would need to change in your life in order to be more willing to assume the servant's role?

2. Jesus washes the disciple's feet, but as He comes to Peter, Peter recoils at the thought. **6 He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." 8 "No," said Peter, "you shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "Unless I wash you, you have no part with me." 9 "Then, Lord," Simon Peter replied, "not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!" 10 Jesus answered, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you." 11 For he knew who was going to betray him, and that was why he said not everyone was clean.**

Peter's pride came very close to causing him to miss the blessing. He was not willing to be humbled by having Jesus wash his feet. Jesus warned Peter that unless he allowed Jesus to wash his feet, Peter would miss out on all Jesus had for him. Peter's response, **"not just my feet but my hands and my head as well!"**

- Just like Peter, how often do we miss some of the deepest blessings Jesus has for us because we are unwilling to humble ourselves?
- How often do we miss out on experiencing the fullness and the depth of God's forgiveness,
- His grace, His mercy, His healing, wholeness and the life He offers?
- How often are we guilty of seeking to give the appearance that we have our acts together when in reality we desperately need what Jesus has to offer?
- What changes need to take place in your life in order for you to be more open and humble?

3. Jesus finishes with the task and proceeds to teach the disciples (and us) about what He has just done. **12 When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. 13 "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. 14 Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. 15 I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.**

- As you think about these words of Jesus being spoken to you what feelings and emotions do they evoke?
- What do you hear God saying to you concerning being a servant?
- What changes need to happen in your life to make the shift from being served to that of serving? How will you respond?
- How can the group help in this process?



This Lenten season let us pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from being served to that of serving humbly in the name of Jesus.

SHIFT

From Fear To Comfort



Our journey through this Lenten season calls us to look at, consider and get in touch with the many shifts that need to take place for us to grow in our relationship with God and each other. They are shifts that if taken seriously will assist us in our personal faith journey and spiritual growth.

Today we come to consider the shift from fear to comfort. Our scripture reference is found in the 14th chapter of the Gospel of John.

Read John 14:1-30

Jesus has shared with His disciples that He is about to leave them. He shares that He will be betrayed and denied. It comes as no surprise that they are disturbed, frustrated and afraid. Their emotions are running wild. Fear grips them as they think about all that Jesus is saying to them. But it is in the midst of all this Jesus that speaks words to help them shift from fear to comfort. As we look at this passage Jesus speaks those same words to us.



Some key points for us to consider as we look at making the shift from fear to comfort:

1. Perhaps some of our biggest fears are being left alone and the uncertainty of the days before us. Jesus gives the disciples (and us) the assurance that He is both going to prepare a place for us and that he will come and take us to be with Him. ***“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going.”***

- What do you hear Jesus saying to you?
- As you think about these words of Jesus how do they help provide comfort?
- How might you share these words of comfort to someone who is facing fear?

2. Jesus addresses the disciples questions (and ours as well). ***5 Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” 6 Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.” 8 Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” 9 Jesus answered: “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the***

Father'? 10 Don't you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work. 11 Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves. 12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

Thomas questions both where Jesus is going and how we can know the way to Him. Thomas follows up with asking Jesus to show him the Father. Fear can cause us to ask all kinds of questions and even at times put doubts in our minds. Jesus shows that it is okay to ask our questions.

- How comfortable are you asking God your questions?
- What questions do you wrestle with that cause you to fear?
- What do you hear God saying in the midst of those times of question, doubt and fear?
- How can we help one another in dealing with our questions?
- How might you help someone who is struggling with their questions understand that it is okay to take them to God?

3. Jesus gives the disciples (and us) the promise of the Holy Spirit, who will counsel us, give us the assurance that we are not alone and remind us of the life we have in Jesus. **15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. 21 Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him." 22 Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" 23 Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. 24 He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me.**

- Do you think that we allow fear to get a grip on us because we are not open to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to have control of our situations, our thoughts, our very lives?
- How does the promise of the Holy Spirit help you make the shift from fear to comfort?
- What needs to happen in your life in order for you to be more open to the Holy Spirit?
- How can you share these promises of Jesus with those who are struggling with fear in order to help them make the shift to finding comfort?

4. Jesus gives the disciples (and us) the promise of His peace. **25 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your**

hearts be troubled and do not be afraid. 28 "You heard me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.' If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. 29 I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe. 30 I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me,

- Do you think we understand the depth of this peace Jesus is promising?
- What are some of the obstacles that keep us from experiencing the peace and comfort God wants to give us?
- How open are you to the Holy Spirit working in your life? To teach you? To give you God's peace?
- How might we help those who do not know this peace find it?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from fear to comfort in order that we might know God's peace and quiet deep within our lives.

SHIFT

From Isolation To Connection



As we continue our journey through Lent we come to look at and consider another shift that needs to take place in order for us to live out our relationship with God and others to the fullest as well as assist us in our faith journey.

Today we come to look at the shift from isolation to connection. Our scripture reference is found in the 15th chapter of the Gospel of John.

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. 9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit — fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other. - John 15:1-17 NIV



1. Jesus begins by pointing out that He is the Vine, we are the branches and God is the Gardener. He continues to address this relationship by pointing out the importance us bearing fruit. ***"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. 8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.***

- As we read these words do you think that we understand that our life is dependent on our connection with Jesus - the Vine?
- Do you think we live like we believe this? If not, why not?

- Do we understand that God, as the Gardener, is the one that is in control and not us?
- Do you think we find it hard at times to give up control to God? If yes, why is that?
- What steps do you need to take in order to abide in Jesus and to give God control?
- Jesus tells us that as we abide in Him we bear fruit. Do you think we understand the importance of bearing fruit in our lives?
- Jesus says that the branch that bears fruit God prunes so that it can produce even more fruit. Why do you think this is necessary? What are some ways that you have experienced God pruning you? What did that feel like?
- What areas of your life does God need to prune so that you might grow and bear even more fruit?

2. Just as we (the braches) are connected to Jesus (the Vine) so we (as braches) are connected to one another in Him. His call is for us to abide in His love and as we do to love one another. Jesus tells us that as we do we bear fruit. **9 "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. 10 If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. 11 I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. 12 My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command. 15 I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 17 This is my command: Love each other.**

- What do you hear Jesus saying as he tells us to love one another?
- Do you think we understand the depth of this love?
- Do you think it is possible that far too many people experience isolation because they are either afraid to love, to be loved or perhaps both?
- Do you think that we understand that we need one another?
- What shifts need to happen in your life in order to move from isolation to connection: Connection to Jesus? Connection to others?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from isolation to connection - connection to Jesus the Vine - so that we might bear fruit for the Kingdom.

SHIFT

From Grief To Joy



This week in our Lenten journey we will be looking at, considering and getting in touch with the shift from grief to joy. This is yet another significant shift that needs to take place if we are to grow in our relationship with God and others and that will likewise help us in our faith journey.

As we think about grief it is something that we tend to be afraid of primarily because it means we have lost someone or something. As a result, we bury pain and hurt or we try to avoid situations or relationships that may cause grief one day. Jesus reminds us grief is a part of life, but a precious part, because from grief will come joy. The Holy Spirit is present and comforts us with the presence and promise of our resurrected Savior Jesus who has overcome the sin, pain, and loss of the world.

Our scripture reference dealing with the shift from grief to joy is found in the 16th chapter of the Gospel of John.

Read John 16:5-33



Let us consider some of the things we learn about making the shift from grief to joy as we look at John 16:5-33.

1. John 16:5-7: ***“Now I am going to him who sent me, yet none of you asks me, ‘Where are you going?’ 6 Because I have said these things, you are filled with grief. 7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. Jesus tells the disciples that He is about to leave them and return to the Father. He has a lot to say to both the disciples and to us concerning grief and loss. As we all know grief and loss are a very real part of life. People die. Marriages end. Patterns change. Disappointment reigns. Life happens. We experience all kinds of heartache. It’s the price we pay for being human.***

- Do you think that it is easy or hard for us to accept that grief and loss are a part of life or do we tend to want to ignore it or bury it?
- What struggles have you had in dealing with grief?

2. John 16:8-11: ***When he comes, he will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 in regard to sin, because men do not believe in me; 10 in regard to righteousness, because I am going to the Father, where you can see me no longer; 11 and in regard to judgment, because the prince of this world now stands condemned. Jesus continues by telling them that the Holy Spirit will come when He leaves.***

He will come to convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment. Jesus wants then (and us) to know that the Holy Spirit comes to strip away all that holds us back from experiencing the fullness of God's grace and righteousness. He comes to open the way for the deeper work that needs to take place in our hearts.

- What do you hear God saying to you here?
- How would the Holy Spirit's work here help you make the shift from grief to joy?
- What needs to happen in your life in order for the Holy Spirit to do His work in helping you make the shift from grief to joy?

3. John 16:12-15 "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. 13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. 15 All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you. Jesus gives the promise that the Holy Spirit will come and teach and guide us in all truth. We need to be open to that guidance and to His teaching. We also need to understand the importance of not only learning all that the Holy Spirit has for us, but also the need to live it out as we put it into practice. In order for us to both know and experience the joy of Jesus, a joy that can lift us from grief, we need to integrate what we know in our heads and heart into our daily walk.

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you as you think about this?
- What changes need to take place for this integration to take place in your life?
- How might you help those who are new to their journey with Jesus to grow?

4. John 16:16-24: "In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." 17 Some of his disciples said to one another, "What does he mean by saying, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me,' and 'Because I am going to the Father'?" 18 They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying." 19 Jesus saw that they wanted to ask him about this, so he said to them, "Are you asking one another what I meant when I said, 'In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me'? 20 I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy. 21 A woman giving birth to a child has pain because her time has come; but when her baby is born she forgets the anguish because of her joy that a child is born into the world. 22 So with you: Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. 23 In that day you will no longer ask me anything. I tell you the truth, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. 24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete. Jesus, being aware that He is about to face His death, is also aware that it is not the end. Resurrection will take place and death will be defeated. He tells the disciples that they will weep and mourn, but that their grief will be turned to joy because of His resurrection and victory over the grave. This is a reminder to us that we do not grieve like the rest of the world does and that resurrection living brings hope—to the hospice bed, the prison cell, the unemployment line, the divorce court, and all the other dead places in our lives. It is a reminder that Jesus does not prevent the dead places in our lives, but rather He joins us there and transforms death into life.

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you as you think about this?
- How does the knowledge of Jesus resurrection help us make the shift from grief to joy?
- How can we help those stuck in grief make the transition finding joy?

5. John 16:25-33 ***“Though I have been speaking figuratively, a time is coming when I will no longer use this kind of language but will tell you plainly about my Father. 26 In that day you will ask in my name. I am not saying that I will ask the Father on your behalf. 27 No, the Father himself loves you because you have loved me and have believed that I came from God. 28 I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” 29 Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. 30 Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” 31 “You believe at last!” Jesus answered. 32 “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. 33 “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” Jesus once again tells the disciples He is about to leave them and they understand. He goes on to tell them that they need to be aware that “in this world you will have trouble.” None of us ever gets a pass on trouble as we will all experience it. But Jesus does not stop there for He tells them (and us) that as trust and hope is out in Him they/we can and will know His peace and live it out.***

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you here?
- What changes need to happen in your life in order that you might know this peace?
- How might we live our lives in a way that shows the world this peace of God that helps us make the shift from grief to joy and that we are more than conquerors through Christ our Lord?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from grief to joy in order that we might experience the blessings God has for us.

SHIFT

From Selfish Prayer To Selfless Prayer



This week in our Lenten journey we will be looking at, considering and getting in touch with the shift from selfish prayer to selfless prayer. This is yet another significant shift that needs to take place if we are to grow in our relationship with God and others and that will likewise help us in our faith journey.

We often refer to “The Lord’s Prayer” as the one Jesus taught His disciples to pray, but throughout the Gospels we get a glimpse of Jesus’ prayer life: He prays before meals. He prays in the Temple. He gets away by Himself to a lonely place to pray. He addresses God intimately as “Abba.” He prays before breaking the bread to feed the 5000. He weeps and prays before raising Lazarus. He prays while wrestling with God’s will in the garden of Gethsemane before surrendering saying, “Not my will but your will be done” (Matthew 26:42). He prays three different times from the cross—with the final one being, “Father, into your hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46).

In John chapter 17, we find one of the most powerful and intimate prayers of all time. In fact, this is the longest and most pointed prayer we have from Jesus—and He’s praying for His disciples—including us. To be able to listen to another person’s prayer is really one of the most intimate things in the world.

Read John 17:1-26



This prayer from Jesus is revealed in 3 sections: Jesus prays for Himself—Jesus prays for the disciples—and Jesus prays for future believers. This is an opportunity for us to see the heart of Jesus while reviewing our hearts and motives in prayer as well as seeing the importance of making the shift from selfish prayer to selfless prayer.

1. Jesus prays for Himself to show the glory of God and to be glorified. John 17:1-5: ***17 After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: “Father, the time has come. Glorify your Son, that your Son may glorify you. 2 For you granted him authority over all people that he might give eternal life to all those you have given him. 3 Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. 4 I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. 5 And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began.***

As Jesus begins this prayer, He knows what’s coming. Within hours, Jesus will be arrested, beaten, examined, tried, condemned, scourged, and crucified. He’s not only been speaking about this for months leading up to the Passover—it was the plan all along. The pre-existent Son of God—the Prince of Heaven—of one essence with the Father and the Spirit—chose to

empty Himself of all that was rightfully His and take on the form of a sinful human being—so He could live a perfect life and die a sacrificially death for the sins of the whole world. Paul in Philippians 2:5-8 speaks of this as he says: ***“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”*** And it was on that cross that Jesus prays that God will be glorified in His suffering and death.

- What can we learn from Jesus as He opens His prayer – praying for Himself that He would glorify God in all that is about to take place?
- How difficult is it for us to pray in the midst of our times of trials and suffering that God be glorified?
- What do you hear God saying to you?
- What changes need to take place in order to make the shift from selfish prayer where we think only of ourselves in times of suffering to selfless prayer where we pray that God would be glorified in times of suffering?

2. Jesus prays for the disciples’ protection, unity, joy, and sanctification. John 17:6-19: ***“I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word. 7 Now they know that everything you have given me comes from you. 8 For I gave them the words you gave me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from you, and they believed that you sent me. 9 I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me, for they are yours. 10 All I have is yours, and all you have is mine. And glory has come to me through them. 11 I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name – the name you gave me – so that they may be one as we are one. 12 While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe by that name you gave me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled. 13 “I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. 14 I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. 15 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. 17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. 18 As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. 19 For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.***

He then prays for that small group of followers who’d stayed with Him to the end. Gone are the massive crowds in Galilee—the cost of discipleship (taking up a cross and following Jesus) was too much for them—but these faithful few remain (probably around 70 in total, including the 11 disciples). He knows they are about to be sifted like wheat. Within hours, they will all desert him and retreat into hiding. Jesus is about to become public enemy number one—and anyone affiliated with Him will run the risk of the same fate. They will act in fear and desert Him, but Jesus has a longer view. He can see Easter on the other side of the cross, and He’s praying God will protect them. He’s praying they will remain unified in His truth—the truth Jesus has poured into them for the last three years. He’s praying they will know joy that transcends the present circumstances, but lives with eternity in mind. He’s praying God will sanctify them with His truth and the Holy Spirit. This prayer of Jesus would cover those disciples through the next few days as well as the rest of their lives.

Jesus's mission on earth was totally dependent on them experiencing His life, death, and resurrection—and becoming the bearers of that message to the world. In a real way, we are here today because of God answering this prayer.

- How do you see Jesus selfless prayer being reflected here?
- Do you think that we see or feel the need to pray for those who follow Jesus – fellow believers?
- Do you think we see or feel the need to pray for those who do not follow Jesus? What do you hear God saying to you?

3. Jesus prays for future believers' unity and evangelism. John 17:20-26: ***“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 “Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 “Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them.”***

As we look at what Jesus is praying here we find that He is praying for us. One the night before His death, He had you in mind. Jesus prays for all the people who will come to believe in Him because of the witness of those original disciples. What an amazing thought that Jesus sees us the same way as He sees the original disciples—one with Him. He prays we will be united in our mission to share the Good News of God's love made real in Jesus with anyone and everyone in our lives. The most powerful tool we have in our witnessing toolbox is the way we love God and love people.

- How does it feel to know that Jesus is praying for you?
- How does that affect the living of your life?
- How does that affect your discipleship?
- How does that change the way you look at yourself, others and God?
- What needs to happen in your life to make the shift from selfish prayer to selfless prayer?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from selfish prayer to selfless prayer in order that we might experience the blessings God has for us.

SHIFT

From Chaos To Harmony



This week in our Lenten journey we will be looking at, considering and getting in touch with the shift from chaos to harmony. This is yet another significant shift that needs to take place if we are to grow in our relationship with God and others and that will likewise help us in our faith journey.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. 2 Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. 3 Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. 4 But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, 5 "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." 6 He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. 7 "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "[It was intended] that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. 8 You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me." 9 Meanwhile a large crowd of Jews found out that Jesus was there and came, not only because of him but also to see Lazarus, whom he had raised from the dead. 10 So the chief priests made plans to kill Lazarus as well, 11 for on account of him many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in him. 12 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written, 15 "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." 16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. 17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!" - John 12:1-19 NIV



This is the last week of Jesus life and as can be seen in our scripture passage there is quite a bit that is taking place involving a whole host of people. At first glance it appears that there is a fair amount of chaos taking place as we find so many people with so many feelings and emotions. Life for us can often be like that – chaotic. As we look at the shift we are focusing on this week we find the call to make the shift from chaos to harmony. As we look to Jesus we find time and again how He made that possible and how He continues to make that possible in and through His presence.

Take a few moments and reflect on the various people in this passage and discuss which of them you can most identify with.

Lazarus who was dead and now alive. Perhaps you can recall a time when Jesus raised you to new life in Him.

Martha who is concentrated on her serving, but missing all that was taking place. Perhaps we have gotten so caught up in serving that we missed the blessing God was trying to show us.

Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus and anoints him – open to all that He has. Perhaps like Mary we are anxious to sit at Jesus feet and are ready and willing to listen to His call.

Judas who was more concerned about the cost of the perfume used to anoint Jesus feet while missing all that was taking place. Perhaps we have found ourselves more caught up in material things allowing them to cause us to miss the blessings in the moment.

The disciples who were taking all this in and trying to figure it out. Perhaps we find ourselves seeking to follow Jesus, but somehow feel lost in how we do that.

The curious crowd who came wanting to see Jesus and Lazarus. They came more curious about what had taken place than seeing and being with Jesus.

The crowd with the palm branches shouting their hosanna's that would be turned into "crucify him" a few short days later. Perhaps we find ourselves at times professing what we believe, but then living lives that reflect something different.

The Pharisees who were plotting to kill Jesus and Lazarus because they were upsetting the status quo of their religion. Perhaps we find ourselves becoming comfortable in the routine of religion while missing a deeper relationship with Jesus.

- What tends to bring chaos into your life?
- What do you hear God saying to you in the midst of your times of chaos - those times when fear, doubt and faith clash?
- What helps you overcome those times – to make the shift from chaos to harmony?
- What does it mean to you to be in harmony with God?
- What does it mean to you to be in harmony with others?
- What does it mean to you to be in harmony with self?
- How can the group help you in making this shift from chaos to harmony?
- How can you help others in their chaotic times to make that shift?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from isolation to connection – connection to Jesus the Vine – so that we might bear fruit for the Kingdom.

SHIFT

From Seeing To Believing



This week as our Lenten journey concludes with our celebration of Easter we will be looking at, considering and getting in touch with the shift from seeing to believing. This is the final significant shift that needs to take place if we are to grow in our relationship with God and others and that will likewise help us in our faith journey.

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. 2 So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" 3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. 6 Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. 8 Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) - John 20:1-19 NIV



We have all heard the saying "seeing is believing" and truth be known we all have operated out of this belief at one time or another. The scriptures tell us just the opposite by telling us that we are to walk by faith and not by sight. Our scripture passage for today will help us to understand how we come to make the shift from seeing to believing.

1. John 20:1-2: ***Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"***

Sometimes we are guilty of being short-sighted. We find this in Mary who went to the tomb early that first Easter Sunday. As she arrives at the tomb and sees the stone rolled away she immediately jumps to the conclusion that someone has broken into the tomb and stolen Jesus body. She then takes off to tell the disciples what she has found. This type of short-sightedness limits our faith and can cause us to jump to all kinds of conclusions.

- Have there been times when you have been guilty of this type of short-sighted faith?
- How has it hindered your faith?
- How has it caused you to miss what God was seeking to show or tell you?
- What changes need to take place?

2. John 20: 3-5: ***3 So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb. 4 Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in.***

Sometimes we are guilty of being far-sighted. We find this in John. We are told that Peter and John go running to the tomb upon hearing Mary's news. John arrives first and we are told that he stops outside. In this respect John is far-sighted in that he ponders all that has taken place and tries to figure out what it all could mean.

- Have there been times when you could relate to John – times when you watch from a distance and ponder, but just don't go all the way in?
- What are the things or situations that have caused you to be far-sighted?
- What changes need to take place?

3. John 20:6-7: ***Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. He saw the strips of linen lying there, 7 as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen.***

Sometimes we are guilty of being near-sighted. We find this in Peter. As Peter arrives at the tomb we are told that he runs right in as he wanted a closer look. Peter could see all the details. He knew the evidence—but he didn't get it! The Gospel of Luke tells us Peter left the tomb and went away wondering to himself about what had happened. Peter was near-sighted. It was all right there in front of him, and he couldn't see it.

- How have we been guilty of being near-sighted – of knowing a lot about Christ, but really not knowing Him?
- What are the things or situations that have caused you to be near-sighted?
- What changes need to take place?

4. John 20:8-9: ***Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. 9 (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)***

The call is for us to become faith-sighted. We find this in John who we are told saw and believed by faith. We are told that John finally goes inside the tomb. He sees the same thing Peter saw – the grave clothes all neatly folded. What John saw with his eyes and pondered in his mind suddenly penetrated his heart. Verse 8 tells us he "saw and believed." The word that the writer uses here meant that John understood. John shows us when he saw the evidence of the empty tomb, something clicked—and he believed.

- What does being faith-sighted mean to you?
- What changes need to happen in order for you to be able to walk by faith and not by sight – to make the shift from seeing to believing?
- What impact would this shift have on your life?
- What impact would this shift have on the lives of others?
- How might you help someone make the shift from seeing to believing?



Let us this Lenten season pray that God, by the power of the Holy Spirit, will help us make the shift from seeing to believing in order that we might experience the blessings God has for us.