

Saint Andrews United Methodist Church

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Fall Bible Study 2024

The Cross Walk



Rev. Carol Grant Gibson – Senior Pastor

Lesson 1 – Jesus and the Man Who Was Paralyzed - Mark 2:1-12

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – The author refers to Jesus as “the Great Physician.” Search through the Gospels to find stories where Jesus healed (some examples can be found in Matthew 8:1-4, 5-13, 23-27). In what ways did Jesus bring physical healing? In what ways did he bring spiritual healing? Which type of healing are you most in need of right now in your life?

2 – From your reading and from Bible stories you have found, what must be present within a person, in many (but not all) cases, before Jesus’ healing takes place? Think of a time in your life when you were lifted out of despair or carried along by the enthusiasm or faith of others – friends, family, or strangers. How did they express to you their faith? How were they able to help you overcome the obstacles to your peace and contentment? In what ways did you benefit from their faith?

3 – When have you failed to see or seize the moment, missing out on an important or special opportunity in your life? Being as honest with yourself as you can, what kept you from recognizing or pursuing that opportunity? How did this affect your thoughts and actions in later situations?

4 – Think of a time when you did see and seize the moment. What did you do differently this time? What was the outcome? In what ways did your relationship with God make a positive difference?

5 – In Hebrews 12:1c, the apostle Paul says, “Let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us”; in your own words, what does this mean? Read Romans 12:12; what does it mean to “persevere in prayer”? What happens when we forget to pray or don’t feel that we have time for it?

6 – What kinds of miracles are most familiar to you? How has God’s love worked miracles in your life or in the lives of others you know? In what ways can God “sing you back to life”? What does the “music of God’s love” sound like? Where do we hear it, and how can we “sing” it to others?

Focus for the Week

Each day this week, make time to meet with God in prayer. Ask God to

*open your eyes to new and existing opportunities;

*help you find the courage to act when the time is right;

*fill you with the determination and perseverance to work through challenges;

*and allow you to be an active part of the miracle of God’s love in your life and in the lives of others, through the example of Jesus Christ.

Lesson 2 – Jesus and Zacchaeus – Luke 19:1-10

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – What made Zacchaeus, a “sinner”, want to see Jesus that day? Why did he try so hard?

2 – What was the importance of Jesus’ calling Zacchaeus by name? What effect do you think this had on Zacchaeus? Read Exodus 3:13-15, Isaiah 62:2; and John 10:3-4. What do these verses tell us about God’s name and about our names?

3 – Hebrews 10:24 says, “Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds”; what does this mean to you? The author refers to Jesus’ special gift for sensing and ministering to the person who needed him the most in any given moment. What can we do to develop these same skills in ourselves? How do we identify those who need us?

4 – The people had labeled Zacchaeus a “sinner” and had negatively judged him based on his profession (a tax collector, loyal to Rome). In what ways do we label people (examples: job, appearance, religious affiliation, and so forth)? Why is it hard for us to reach out to people we have a negative view of? What can we do to see people as they really are, and the potential they have to become something new, as Jesus did with Zacchaeus?

5 – Zacchaeus had made mistakes in the past, but Jesus gave him another chance. How did Zacchaeus respond? Read Matthew 18:21-22 and Ephesians 4:31-32. What do these verses tell us about forgiveness and giving someone another chance?

6 – According to Ellsworth Kalas, God is saying to each one of us, “I recruited you. You are a part of my team, and I need you.” What role do you feel God is calling you to play on the team? Read Ephesians 4:4-6, and 1 Corinthians 12:14-21, 26. Explain these verses in your own words. If Christ is the head of the church and we are all members of Christ’s body, give examples of how we can all work together for the good of Christ and the good of the church.

Focus for the Week

Pray these words from Psalm 19:14: “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.” Think about and work at using your words to show others they truly are loved, forgiven, and needed.

Lesson 3 – Jesus and the Syrophenician Woman – Mark 7:24-30

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – Try to describe how you imagine Jesus' voice sounded: serious and solemn? inviting and laughing? powerful and commanding? In what ways does Jesus speak to you? Who does most of the talking and who does most of the listening – or is there an even, two-way dialogue?

2 – Read Mark 7:24-30. Why do you think Jesus responded to the woman in the way he did? Could he have made the same point as forcefully but in a different way? How?

3 – In Mark 7:28, the woman's response is indicative of her great faith. What other people in the Bible displayed such faith, and how? (You may use your Bible to find examples.) What people in the world today display such faith, and how? In what ways has your faith been tested, and how did you respond?

4 – Respond to this question: "Why do we have trouble speaking the words of love?" Is telling someone you love them sometimes better than showing it? Why might this be true?

5 – Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and answer the following questions. In what ways is love expressed in one's attitude? In one's actions? Give specific examples from your life or from the lives of others you know.

Focus for the Week

Think about all of the ways in which you express yourself, and try to see yourself the ways others might. Can people tell by your words, your attitude, and your actions that you are full of love for God and for your fellow human beings? Read Matthew 22:37-39, and pray for yourself and others that "Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love" (Ephesians 3:17).

Lesson 4 – Jesus and Caiaphas – Matthew 26:58-68

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – How do “good” people lose their way – their sense of purpose – and what are the warning signs? Who is to blame – the individual? family members? friends? society? Is there a way in which we can help? How? How might prayer and Christian fellowship make a difference?

2 – Jesus, condemning a number of the scribes and Pharisees for other corrupt practices, told them, “You cleanse the outside of the cup and leave the inside filthy” (Matthew 23:23, 25), paraphrased). What do you think Jesus meant by this? How was Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, guilty of this practice? How are we?

3 – The author says, “Many people these days...mistakenly believe that being saved means playing it safe. Nothing could be less biblical than that.” Look through the Gospels to find examples of Jesus and the disciples choosing service over safety. In what ways has God called you to serve and, in doing so, to ignore what would usually be considered “safe”?

4 – What are some ways in which we choose convenience over Christ? Read Matthew 7:13-14. What does this passage tell us about the Christian way of life?

5 – Throughout the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), Jesus calls each of us to action – to follow his example and set ourselves to the work of making a positive difference in the lives of others. Scan Matthew 5-7 and name some of the requirements of Christian discipleship that Jesus has set out for us. Using these as guidelines, what areas of your life do you feel called to improve upon right now?

Focus for the Week

The author uses the story of Caiaphas to show that as human beings we all face temptation, and that even “good people can slowly but surely lose their way.” A troubled life doesn’t always involve a sudden, drastic turn for the worse; decay happens in small increments, a little at a time. This week, think privately about specific ways you can recognize and overcome the temptations you face in your life. Read God’s word and speak to God in prayer for guidance in making wise decisions, as you strive to let God’s word be “a lamp to your feet and a light to your path” (Psalm 119:25, adapted).

Lesson 5 – Jesus and Judas – John 13:21-30

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – The author describes Judas not as a caricature of evil, but as a flawed human being. Think about Judas, the person. Why do you think he was chosen to be an apostle? What characteristics do you think he possessed that led him to be chosen as the apostles' treasurer? What does the author say was the real tragedy of Judas?

2 – Describe a time in your life when you gave up, failed to see a situation through, or didn't work through your troubles. What was the result? Were you seeking God's guidance at this time in your life? In what ways was God guiding you?

3 – Read Hebrews 2:17-18 and Hebrews 4:15-16. How is Jesus able to offer us a special help and understanding – a new perspective – when we are tempted and face trouble? Now read Isaiah 40:31. What does this passage tell us about the healing power of God?

4 – Read Luke 22:32, Romans 15:2, and 1 Thessalonians 5:11. What are the central messages of these verses? Think of a time when you were able to help others as the result of suffering or difficulties that you had faced. How did you offer your counsel or assistance? How did God use you to do God's good works?

5 – In your own words, rewrite or explain this statement: "There is no pit so deep that God is not deeper still." How is our faith changed and our relationship with God made new through our suffering and our struggles?

6 – Through his crucifixion and resurrection, Jesus turned the defeat of death into the victory of eternal life. From your own life or the lives of others, give some examples where God's grace was at work to turn defeat into victory.

Focus for the Week

To persevere means to have enduring patience, to "persist or remain constant to a purpose, an idea, or a task in the face of obstacles or discouragement". And for Christians, our purpose is to follow the example of Jesus Christ in loving God and loving others. This week in your prayers, share with God your burdens, your struggles, your fears, your sorrows – everything that is weighing heavily in your mind and on your heart. Ask God to open your eyes to a new understanding, to deepen your faith, to give you the strength to help others, and to impart to you the ability to turn your defeats into victories. And most of all, ask God to give you the perseverance you need to get to "the strength and new life that comes from going through trouble and getting to the other side."

Lesson 6 – Jesus and Pontius Pilate – Matthew 27:15-26

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – According to the author, Pilate’s actions and decisions during Jesus’ trial and sentencing were motivated by his being “scared, confused, and weak.” When you experience these feelings, how do they play themselves out in your actions and decision making? Read Psalm 23; John 14:27; and 2 Corinthians 13:11. What do these passages tell us about inner peace and calm and where to find it?

2 – Explain this statement: “Real success is not out there; it’s in here.” How do we know whether we are successful? How can we tell whether someone else is successful?

3 – The author says that a dream, a cause, a purpose, and a ministry are all most important than money and possessions. Do you agree? Give some examples that show this to be true or not to you. Think about and then try to answer this question: What is your dream, your cause, your purpose, or your ministry?

4 – The Gospels show a number of examples of Jesus being a servant, including his washing the apostles’ feet at the Last Supper (John 13:3-5), healing on the sabbath, even though forbidden by law (Matthew 12:10-13), and feeding a large crowd of hungry people who had come to hear him preach (Matthew 14:13-21). What was Jesus trying to show us with these acts? What does being a servant mean to you? How can we be the kind of servants Jesus is calling us to be?

Focus for the Week

Some say that the things that are the most important to us are those on which we spend the most time. Being as honest with yourself as possible, rank your current priorities in life, such as family; friends; work; property (house, car, money); technology (computers, the internet); recreation, entertainment, and leisure (sports, movies, music, vacations, rest or sleep); self-improvement; community service; church; worship; prayer; Bible study; and any other categories you can think of. What do you think your list says about what you value or believe is important? How much time or energy do you spend on yourself? on others? What changes, if any, do you feel you need to make?

Lesson 7 – Jesus and Mary Magdalene – John 20:11-18

(You may use the backside of this sheet for your responses and notes.)

1 – Describe a “storm” you have experienced in your life. How were you able to get through it? What comfort did you find during this difficult time? Describe what it was like when the “storm” subsided and the “daylight” broke through.

2 – Describe what it means to you to “live deep”. What are the outward signs of a deep life? What are the inward signs? How do God and your relationship with God fit into your idea of a deep life?

3 – The author says that “spires (like church steeples) always outlast spears because spires are made out of love and for love.” What are some ways in which the church today shows or encourages agape – unconditional love? How can the church improve in this area? What can you do to better show agape in your own life?

4 – Mary Magdalene was one of Jesus’ most faithful disciples, she was present at his crucifixion, was the first to find his tomb empty on Easter morning, and was the first person to whom Jesus revealed himself after his resurrection. Read John 20:11-18 and try to imagine yourself to Mary’s place at these events, and describe the thoughts and feelings she must have had. How does the good news of Jesus Christ has risen and gone on to God to prepare for a new life for us there – strengthen and transform your faith?

5 – Take just a few minutes to think about or discuss the time you have spent in this study. What have you learned and experienced in your walk with Jesus? In what ways have you grown and changed? How has your relationship with God and with others been enriched? How can you help others to have faith, live deep, and love much!

Focus for the Week

As you celebrate the glory and triumph of Jesus Christ in the world, look back upon the road Jesus took to get here – his “cross walk”, and ask yourself these questions: Where are you in your walk with Jesus? Where have you traveled, and where are you headed?

Jesus’ message to each of us is simply this: Love God and love others. This week and every week, today and every day, let this message guide you in your walk. And even through the valleys, even through the storms, you’ll never have to talk alone: God is walking with you, each step of the way!