



LENT 2018
Jubilee Church
Devotional Booklet
John 14-17

Introduction

To prepare our hearts and minds in the period of Lent, we have written devotions based on a unique account found in John 14-17. As we reflect on Jesus' parting words to his disciples, we gain insights into Jesus' main concerns for them before he went on to complete his work on the Cross. He said: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life." (14:6) He promised them the Holy Spirit. He commanded them to love one another. He warned them about persecution. He prepared them for his own death. And finally he prayed for them.

Each of these topics is essential for us who are followers of Jesus Christ. The Way includes difficulties. The Truth includes suffering. The Life includes death. In the period of Lent, as we prepare ourselves with Jesus' words, we receive divine peace in the midst of worldly troubles. May the kindling of our desire for God during our daily quiet time become a united bonfire in service every Sunday.

How to use this Devotional Material?

This devotional material is meant for our Lent spiritual preparation: to be ready to receive anew the good news of God for the liturgical year of 2018. It can be complemented with worship, group discussions and personal journal writings to enrich the preparation process. At the very least, it can be used in 4 simple steps, cheekily labelled: PPAP.

Prayer (P): Start with a prayer of enlightenment. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you in your reflection of God's Word.

Passage (P): Read the assigned biblical passage.

Application (A): Read the reflection in the material for a deeper understanding of the text, and think about its meaning for your relationship with God.

Prayer (P): End with a prayer for transformation. Ask for God to enable you to live out His Word.

Day 1 Feb 14

Passage: Gospel of John 13:36-38

When Peter heard that Jesus would temporarily leave His disciples as they would not be able to take part in the "time and space" of His departure, he expressed to the Lord his will to follow Him to the end of His life at whatever cost.

In the narration of the Gospel of John, two themes keep showing up from Chapters 1 to 13: the "time" and "space" of Jesus.

The "space" of Jesus is indicated by the common word "where", e.g. "where I came from and where I am going". And the "time" of Jesus is indicated by the sentence "the time has come".

The conversation in today's passage occurred when "Jesus knew that His time had come to depart from this world to the Father." (13: 1).

Peter had followed Jesus all the way since he met Jesus at the place where Jesus lived and was given a new name "Cephas" by Jesus. (1:42) When journeying with Jesus, Peter heard and experienced a lot of Jesus' teachings of "space" and "time", which were so rich and astounding that at that moment Peter could not accept that Jesus would (temporarily) cut off all "time" and "space" from him! Jesus had just washed his feet;

Jesus had just told him again that He would be betrayed...
Peter was reluctant to be separated from the Lord Jesus!

PRAYER: Dear Father, thank You for loving us in Your holiness and majesty, embracing us who are weak and corrupt, carrying us to a new heaven and a new earth where we are free to run, laugh and praise. Have mercy on us, so that by loving one another, we will live heavenly lives and move more people to Your kingdom of love. We commit everything into Your hands. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Day 2 Feb 15

Passage: Gospel of John 13: 36-38

After hearing Peter's claim, Jesus told Peter that he would deny the Lord three times in time to come! Jesus' response to Peter indicated that His temporary departure was inevitable.

This reminds us that in the Old Testament, the Lord revealed the actions He was going to take to the people of Israel through the prophet Isaiah. Although God was in control, God chose to reveal Himself and complete His plan for His people in time and space!

From the very beginning of the Gospel of John till now, we know that the Lord Jesus came from the Father, and in many occurrences He showed us where He came from. Even though His identity was so unique, Jesus did not simply walk triumphantly on this earth.

On the contrary, after the Lord Jesus had revealed how extraordinary He was, He chose to depart, to where His disciples could no longer follow. And His departure would cause Peter to deny Him three times. We cannot help but ask the question "why?" which might be the same question in Peter's mind.

However at that moment, it was more important for Jesus to let things happen and to go through the process of departure in space and time!

PRAYER: Dear Lord, Jesus' decision to leave the world reminds me of my hesitation to make a tough decision. But today's passage gives me the courage to get out of my comfort zone and make a brave decision. Lord, please help me.

If I am like an exhausted eagle who has crossed the midlife mark of my life, please prepare me and make good use of the second half of my life. Lord, please help me serve and work through Your grace throughout my life, so that the world will see and know You!

Day 3 Feb 16

Passage: Gospel of John 14:1-6

Jesus' speech about His departure disturbed His disciples, and He began to comfort them. His speech of comfort was very long, and the message was very rich and unique.

Please read Chapter 14 again carefully. You will find that Jesus did not mention HOW he would leave, but He did explain WHY he had to leave—to make ready a place for His disciples. Although Jesus said His destination was His Father's house, He did not explain why He had to make ready the place! And He did not specify what the Father's house looked like. In summary, Jesus did not provide much information about the Father's house throughout His speech.

Please pay special attention to the uniqueness of this whole passage: He turned the focus of His departure completely onto the relationship between the Father, Himself, the Holy Spirit and His disciples. To put it in another way, we should understand what Jesus experienced by what He said here. Without this message in His speech, the implication of what happened to Jesus would not be so unique and significant.

In this context, we know that Jesus' departure referred to His death and ascension to the Father. Jesus wanted His disciples to pay more attention to who He was by mentioning little about His crucifixion.

PRAYER: Dear Lord, help us who are lost to go back to Your way, help us who live under the delusion to see Your truth, encourage us to be born again by Christ. May you be in us and us in you forever, from this day onwards. Amen.

Day 4 Feb 17

Passage: Gospel of John 14:1-6

Jesus comforted His disciples concerning His "departure". He said little about how to go and where to go, but instead turned their attention away from "space" and onto Himself!

At this moment of His "departure", Jesus once again drew His disciples' attention to Himself: who was the one who was going to leave? What was the crucial relationship between Himself and His "departure"? All these questions concerning who Jesus was and the significance of His life were questions that would remain unanswered and people would be none the wiser unless Jesus, the person in question, made His self-proclamation.

No matter how closely one has observed another and how deep the understanding, we cannot be absolutely sure of another living being. Of course, any statement made by oneself may or may not be true and credible and is therefore subjected to scrutiny.

At this critical juncture, it was Jesus who provided His disciples with a crucial testimony to reveal who He was. In His conversation with His disciples about His "departure", Jesus said He is the way, the truth and the life.

If Jesus was simply an innocent victim or a sinless scapegoat, His significance to the world would not be so great and certain.

Jesus is not only the way to the Father, but also the Way Himself. Because He is the Way, through Him we have one true way to go to the Father.

PRAYER: Our Father, may your Holy Spirit lead us, grant us the grace of forgiveness, accept our fragility and weakness, just as You have fully accepted Peter who denied Jesus three times. Apart from you I have no good thing. May we always live in the hope of Jesus' resurrection.

Day 5 Feb 19

Passage: Gospel of John 14:7-11

The Lord Jesus shifted the focus of Thomas' question (V 5) on Himself. Thomas asked Jesus where to go and how to get there. Jesus' answer drew His disciples' attention to who He was. Jesus is not only the way but also the destination. For Jesus had expressed that the person who has seen and known Him has also seen and known the Father.

The history of Jewish faith had never seen such a self-proclamation like the one made by the Lord Jesus. None of the Old Testament characters who had a special relationship with God said anything like what Jesus said. Even Moses, Isaiah and Ezekiel never regarded themselves as being equal with God. We may recall that there was a couple who wanted to be God-like and went against God (Adam and Eve).

The Old Testament consistently emphasizes the transcendence and holiness of God the Father. But on the other hand, God consistently shows what is in His heart: to walk with man and to dwell with man. When Jesus answered Philip, He pointed out that the person who had seen Him had also seen the Father. Such words are so incredible that only God can take the initiative to reveal this. We should now stop and bow down to worship, so that the truth revealed by Jesus continues to guide our thoughts and minds.

Keeping in mind that the person who has seen Him has seen the Father, let us once again ponder Jesus' works in the Gospel of John.

PRAYER: Lord, may Your grace humble us so that Your will becomes our prayer. May Your love manifested in the Gospels strengthen our weak body and renew our youth like the eagle's. Let us embrace the gospel, by forgiving one another in Your love. Bless Your church so that the body of Christ will grow to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

Day 6 Feb 20

Passage: Gospel of John 14:7-11

In order to lead His disciples to a deeper understanding of what it means by “those who have seen Him have seen the Father”, Jesus pointed out that His deeds were carried out through the Father who lived in Him! Jesus clearly stated that it was the Father in Him who performed His miraculous deeds. The Father was in Jesus, and whatever Jesus said and did were all from the Father.

Since the creation of the heavens and the earth, the God Almighty who transcends all things has shown His desire to dwell with His creation. With the heavens and the earth as His dwelling place, He manifested His presence with His people through the Tabernacle, the Ark and the Temple of Jerusalem. Now God the Father was with Jesus, the incarnate beloved Son of God.

Jesus, the Beloved, did many things for His people to show God’s presence among His people. John’s accounts included: turning water into wine; the act of judgment in the Temple; promising the Samaritan woman living water; healing the paralyzed man who had been ill for thirty-eight years on the Sabbath; walking on water; feeding 5,000 with five loaves and two fish; forgiving the sins of the woman caught for adultery; healing the man born blind; raising Lazarus from the dead. This series of events resembled what God the Father had done in

the Old Testament, and now it happened again among the people through Jesus. It is the Father in Jesus who performed His miraculous deeds.

The person who has seen Jesus' deeds has seen the Father's deeds. What is more, Jesus went on to say that His disciples would have similar experiences -- the Father would work in them.

PRAYER: Our Heavenly Father, thank You. As You said, how can we find the living among the dead? The created world understands that death is the end. Death is the end for us and all of creation. Yet in knowing You, we now realise You are the source and the Lord of life, but You willingly entered into our death, bore and experienced death for us, and showed us that you are able to rise from the dead.

Day 7 Feb 21

Passage: Gospel of John 14:12-14

By answering the question of “where to go?” and "how to go?", Jesus revealed His previously hidden life and identity to His disciples. Without these coming directly from Jesus, His disciples would never know who Jesus was except by His own proclamation.

On the other hand, since Jesus revealed all these to His disciples, it was an indication of what it meant for Jesus to ask His disciples to "believe in Him". Jesus wanted His disciples to believe in Him according to the content and significance of what He revealed. Believing in Jesus meant believing in ALL of His self-proclamation. Jesus then gave a lengthy speech to show how His disciples should live from then on.

Starting from verse 12, Jesus’ topic centred around "how His believers should live." His proclamation was again astonishing. In His unique style, He said, "I tell you the solemn truth, the person who believes in me... will perform greater deeds than these, ... If you ask me anything in My name, I will do it."

Let us respond with worship on hearing such words declared by the Lord Jesus. Initially, Jesus pointed out that His disciples should believe in him and depend on Him when He returned to the Father. In other words, besides the Father, Jesus was the one whom His disciples could put their trust in.

PRAYER: Our loving Father, thank You for sending Your only begotten Son to the world for the sake of love, bringing an unprecedented change to our lives. Thank you for showing Your glory in the world through Your Son so that we may know You from the words and deeds of the Lord Jesus and turn to You. Holy Spirit Advocate, thank You for being with us so that we may have fellowship with God through You. May You continue to help us and pray for us so that we ask according to the will of God. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 8 Feb 22

Passage: Gospel of John 14:12-14

"Any who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these." (NIV) This is how the believers would live after Jesus departed from this world and went to the Father: trusting in the name of Jesus and doing "greater" deeds in the world.

Jesus was no longer with His believers, because He was "going to the Father". Although Jesus was not in the world anymore, He had become the Lord just like the Father whom His believers called upon and depended on. His proclamation in the passage earlier (V6-11) was to have such an effect on the lives of His disciples beyond that of pure fantasy or wishful thinking. His speech was totally credible because all of it was based on Jesus' ministry and way of life.

Jesus comes from and belongs to God the Father. He lived in the world by believing in and depending on the Father. The requests made by the Son to the Father were entirely fulfilled by the Father. This was how Jesus restored and demonstrated the normal and ideal God-man relationship.

Jesus also enabled His disciples to once again enter into a state of belonging to God and calling upon God when in need. From now onwards, He would be the master of life whom his disciples trusted.

When His disciples asked of the Lord Jesus as they asked of the Father, the Lord Jesus would do all that His disciples asked in His holy name.

PRAYER: O Lord, we are certainly no orphans, because You never ever forsake us. Today I have faith and hope. I am willing to renew my commitment and submit myself to You till the end. O Lord, we believe that You love us to the end, because the cross illustrates this truth.

O Lord, may we take the journey of faith together with Your blessings, and walk on the way which pleases You. O Lord, thank You for giving us hope in this life, because the Lord of the cross is the Lord of the resurrection and Your Spirit is with us. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Day 9 Feb 23

Passage: Gospel of John 14:15-24

In this passage, Jesus returned to the topic of His "departure" as in 13:36. Herein Jesus told His disciples that He would return and they would see Him again. This statement explains that Jesus is in the Father, the disciples are in Jesus and Jesus is in them. Such an inter-relationship is the result of Jesus' "departure" and "return". The reasoning is as follows:

Not only does our Lord Jesus have a special relationship with the Father, He is also in the position to ask the Father to grant the Holy Spirit to His believers. The Holy Spirit is also the Spirit of God the Father, the Spirit of truth. The incarnation and departure of Jesus enables all His believers to belong to Him. Whoever belongs to Jesus will receive the Spirit whom Jesus sought from His Father.

As they have now received the Holy Spirit (also the Spirit of the Father), all the believers, Christ, and God the Father are in communion with one another. This communion has always been the holy fellowship between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After the Jesus event was completed, those who believed in Jesus were brought into the fellowship of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. From then on, the relationship between God and man has been restored, and man can share God's life by believing in Jesus.

It should be noted that the reconciled relationship between God and man was not meant to provide a supernatural or special religious experience for believers. It was meant to produce a man who would purely live his life in obedience to the word of the Lord. This was how Jesus Himself lived all his days in God for the sake of man.

PRAYER: O Lord, come. O Holy Spirit, come into our hearts. In the name of Jesus Christ, we acknowledge and receive You. Be our Lord. Fill and guide us. Heavenly Father, we are in Your presence, knowing that You do not despise those who are rejected or lonely. Your healing, light and encouragement will fill us and never leave us, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

Note: The Jesus event includes his birth, life, passion, death and resurrection.

Day 10 Feb 24

Passage: Gospel of John 14:25-31

Jesus gave this important summary before concluding His speech in Chapter 14. This summary shows us what kind of lives Jesus' believers should have.

Firstly, Jesus' believers should always have Jesus Christ as the center and foundation of their lives. The Holy Spirit causes believers to keep remembering everything Jesus said to them. And everything Jesus has said, of course, includes everything related to Jesus. Believers should realize that they are actually living in the effect of all these things (for example, they belong to Christ and have received the Holy Spirit).

Secondly, as Jesus has accomplished his task, believers are now able to join the communion of God. The outcome of the restored God-man relationship is peace. Such peace is brought about by the Jesus event alone. This peace comes only from Jesus and because of Jesus, so it is not as what the world gives.

Thirdly, since believers belong to God entirely because of God's effort and accomplishment, the disciples need not be distressed or discouraged by Jesus' departure. The distance of "space" and the gap of "time" would have no impact at all. On the contrary, Jesus' accomplishment in "space" and "time" brings forth the relationship of eternal peace between God and man. God is the peace and joy of man.

PRAYER: May each of us open our hearts to God, the Father of Jesus Christ, to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the Holy Spirit who comes from the Father and the Son. As we know the Holy Spirit, we listen to Him, watch Him, read Him, and we can experience Him. Let us receive Him in our hearts as our King. No matter what kind of exclusion, rejection and abandonment we will experience, we are always able to stand firm. May You continue to accept, strengthen and guide us.

Day 11 Feb 26

Passage: Gospel of John 15:1-17

When the Lord Jesus said, “I am the true vine,” the disciples must have been astonished. Because God, through two thousand years of their history, had never stopped referring to this, the fruits of the vines, to describe Israel’s meaning and value.

So what exactly is the relationship between Israel and God?

Isaiah 5:7 (NET):

“Indeed Israel is the vineyard of the Lord who commands armies, the people of Judah are the cultivated place in which he took delight.” In Isaiah 5:1-6 God referred to Himself as the gardener of the vineyard. He was there to care, weed, prune, with the hope that the vineyard would produce vines. This vineyard was what He had re-created, a new life, a chosen people. Yet things went wayward, and the people of Israel produced bad fruits and lived corrupt lives. “What more can I do for my vineyard beyond what I have already done? When I waited for it to produce edible grapes, why did it produce sour ones instead?” (5:4) “He waited for justice, but look what he got—disobedience! He waited for fairness, but look what he got—cries for help!” (5:7)

Even though the Israelites belonged to God and knew God, and God had utilized an unusual and unique process to help them become a country, as a nation that inhabited Palestine,

they were bad fruits, and God had to repair them. Please refer to verse 6: “I will make it a wasteland; no one will prune its vines or hoe its ground, and thorns and briers will grow there. I will order the clouds not to drop any rain on it.”

So when the Lord Jesus said, “I am the true vine,” please do not forget the next verse “my Father is the gardener.” Jesus once again reminded his fellow Jews of the origin/source. Even though the Israelites during Jesus’ time were still rebellious, God the Father had not given up. Thus Jesus urged them to repent, and God would re-cultivate them so that they would bear good fruits.

PRAYER: God, thank you for Your discipline. Thank you that You never gave up on us.

Day 12 Feb 27

Passage : Gospel of John 15:1-17

God said “I am the true vine, the branches must remain in the vine to bear fruits, apart from me you can do nothing.” When the branch leaves the vine and source of life, even though the branch still has within itself the potential to bear fruits, it cannot realistically do so when it is not connected to the source of life. Even though branches that fall off from the vine can survive on their own for a day or two, they will eventually wither and decay. In fact, though Jesus was relating this to the Jews at that time, it was meant to remind all people. He was using the platform of the chosen people of God, through the relationship between God and Israel, to express God himself. This Father is the God who was referred to in Genesis, who created the heavens and the earth. The ‘there be’ which our God spoke, was in reference to a beautiful, plentiful ‘there be’ which would exhilarate man. And this ‘there be’ originates from ‘I am’, from God Himself, the source of life, and is also the one whom Lord Jesus calls ‘Father.’ Of course there is a condition here, that is only the Father can create “there be”. This is akin to the branch that has an innate potential to bear fruits and is able to sustain/survive for several days despite having detached itself from the organic structure of the vine. Similarly, we are able to sustain and survive for tens of years, with scientific advances perhaps 2-300 years, but will eventually wither and disappear, because we ourselves are

not the source of life, our survival/life is dependent on the source. Much like the branches of the vine that can only bear fruits when they remain in the vine.

As was described in Psalm 1 “He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.” And our Father is the source of this life, bringing about life, allowing life to live, enabling ‘there be’ to emerge, and to let ‘there be’ continue in a healthy and sustaining fashion. This is what Genesis Chapter 1 showed us.

PRAYER: God, call us to trust You and rely on You daily.

Day 13 Feb 28

Passage: Gospel of John 15:1-17

What does it mean to bear good fruits? Please look at Jesus' life. When Jesus said "I am the true vine," he was saying a fact, an actuality. He had become a Jew and lived like one amongst the Jews, and by living His life in righteousness, fairness, truth, He lived out an ideal, a standard for Jews as envisioned in God's eyes.

Jesus would not be ashamed of the status of conquered Jews, instead, He would enter into their situation and walk by them. He was willing to be baptized by John the Baptist at the Jordan River. What the Jews could not do, Jesus did for them. The Jews could not withstand temptation, could not withstand the allure of the circumstances, forsook God, and did not live up to God's expectation of His people. On the contrary, Jesus would not compromise and give in to his circumstances. He persisted in following God's word, he had already done what the Father had wanted Him to do. Hence when He said, "I am the true vine", it was based on the past three decades of His life. The disciples who listened to His Word were able to evaluate immediately if He was as He said.

We are no different from the Jews. We are finite beings, will be tempted, will fail, will not do what should be done but instead do what should not be done. Yet we have hope and a role model in Jesus, for this Jesus who in eternity is Lord, is

God, has come into this limited time and space of ours, and become a real man. Our faith is not about espousing ideals or doctrine, rather it is about telling the truth and speaking about a unique life – Jesus.

He then went on to say that His disciples needed to unite with Him, and that He would also join with them, in this way the Father would also be in them, thereby enabling them to bear fruits.

PRAYER: Oh God, thank you for Your Word made flesh, living amongst us, and calling for us to know You.

Day 14 Mar 1

Passage: Gospel of John 15:1-17

There is another passage in the book of Isaiah 27: 2-6, 12-13 where a vineyard was again mentioned, one that was personally overseen and managed by God. God was no longer outraged, He was at peace and calm, and the result of his work was a blossoming vineyard that bore sumptuous fruits. However, is the passage just talking about a vineyard? The picture was in fact a vision of the revival of Israel. God would one day bring His people back. All who were exiled would return to Jerusalem. Yahweh wanted to rebuild the vineyard, and this would be fulfilled on that day. We can imagine, this would be a day which all Jews would be looking forward to, because this was the symbol of God having forgiven them and reconciling with them. This would also be what we gentiles would look forward to, because the revival of the vineyard would mean that righteousness and peace had come to earth.

Has that day arrived?

Jesus said "I am the true vine," signifying that Jesus is the true Israel, fully and clearly stating the traits which Israel should possess: peace, righteousness and faithfulness. Israel of the past could be portrayed as wild grapes. Arrogant leaders and people abandoned God, and the community was filled with violence and injustice. The true vine would be a kingdom of God manifested on earth, demonstrating new order and

righteousness, to subvert the current violence and injustice of the world.

God wants to reconcile with His people. But how could we, being sinful people, reconcile with our Holy God? So in verse 3, Jesus said, because of the word He has spoken to us, we are already clean. Indeed through the Word of Jesus, our sins are cleansed, so let us turn around as newly created people, enter God's revived kingdom, enter new Israel, and become one of the healthy and sumptuous fruit on the true vine. Halleluiah!

PRAYER: Oh God, thank You for redeeming us and reviving us.

Day 15 Mar 2

Passage: Gospel of John 15:1-17

A vine has many branches, and on the surface, it would actually be difficult to tell the difference between one branch and the next. It would be difficult to pin-point exactly where one branch ends and where another begins. The only thing that is clear though, is that the branches are everywhere, that these branches all come from the same vine, and regardless of how many branches there may be, there is only one main trunk that supplies the nutrients. And the trunk transports nutrients to every branch and to the very end of each twig.

Similarly, in a group of believers, there should be no solo believer, but rather the relationships amongst the believers should mirror those of the branches, wreathed together, entangled, mutually dependent and supportive of one another. Of course, we need to have smooth-running channels. We need to open our hearts, and our Lord Jesus Christ who is this big tree, will be able to provide the spring of life to every twig, and enable us to bear fruits in our lives. He has created us, and He also enables our lives to be fruitful.

In the Old Testament, vines bearing fruits referred to abundant and fruitful life, so in the New Testament, Paul used the bearing of the fruit of the Holy Spirit to stress that believers should be obedient in listening to God. At the same time, Paul also pointed out that the fruit of the Holy Spirit (love,

joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) is the beautiful outcome of believers in following God. If we help more people live this kind of life, then we are also bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said: This I command you—to love one another. Whether or not we as believers have the presence of God in our lives depends on whether we love and support other believers. No one has ever seen God. However if we love one another, God resides in us. If we are to maintain the union with our Holy Father and Son, and at the same time love one another, share our lives through showing concern and support for other believers, our lives will be filled with joy, and we will manifest the authenticity of our faith. We will certainly experience the joy and abundance of life granted by God.

PRAYER: Oh God, may Your love help us to love one another.

Day 16 Mar 3

Passage: Gospel of John 15:18-19

In today's passage, Jesus spoke honestly to His disciples, "The world hates you." (V19)

In the Gospel of John, is there any negative connotation when it comes to "the world"? In verse 19, "the world" shows up 5 times. From the solemn tone of Jesus, we sense the antithesis between the world and Jesus, the Light that shines into the world.

Why does the world hate the disciples? Jesus said, it was because the world hated Jesus and God the Father first. Jesus pointed out the crux of the matter directly: the world was opposed to God; the world was not ready to receive God; the world did not go towards God but went against God.

Why did Jesus tell His disciples "the world hates you because you are not of the world"? He was not trying to stir up the disciples' hatred of the world, but preparing the disciples to face the hostile world in time to come, just as He Himself did.

Facing the future is different from predicting the future. We often hope to predict the future so that we can plan, hence fortune tellers are never out of business. However, people are often reluctant to learn how to face the future. Those who just want to predict the future but fail to face the future will come to nothing.

Jesus wanted His disciples to be aware that the world would be hostile to them when they bore witness to the world in the future. What's more, Jesus wanted the disciples to know how to regard the surroundings in which they were living after He had left. Jesus' teaching was totally different from the window-dressing acts of today: when a church mentions a vision and a company mentions investment prospects, only the good news will be covered. Jesus approached this the other way – He prepared His disciples for this hostile world.

Are you prepared to face and live in this hostile world as Jesus did and in His way?

Day 17 **Mar 5**

Passage: Gospel of John 15:20-25

Many people decline to give their testimony because they regarded their lives as too dull to impress others, short of ups and downs. Does the Lord Jesus really want us to use our exciting life experiences to testify for the gospel?

Today's passage shows us two key points in giving a testimony for the Lord: First, as Jesus said in verse 22, "If I had not come and **spoken** to them, they would not have been guilty of sin." This implies that the teaching or word of the Lord has come to us. Secondly, as Jesus said in verse 24, "If I had not **done** among them the works that no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin." This implies that the works of the Lord have been revealed to us. In other words, the content of the gospel is what the Lord said and did. This is the content and core of our testimony. The purpose in bearing witness for the Lord is not merely to increase the number of church members, but to have people put their trust in what the Lord said and did so that they may have life. Our determination to bear witness for the Lord should not be shaken by the environment and the system. We should preach the gospel and bear witness for the Lord in season and out of season.

What will we experience when we bear witness for the Lord? Jesus said in verse 20, "Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.'" This statement is

not about His superiority and our inferiority, nor does it mean that the servant is mistreated by his master. Jesus reminded us that we, as His servants, would be persecuted if Jesus our Master was persecuted. Jesus was preparing us for potential persecution and teaching us to have a positive attitude. If it really happens, may we continue to trust in Him through all circumstances?

Let us ponder: what will stop us from testifying to what the Lord said and did? The Lord is sovereign, therefore nothing can stop the gospel from spreading in good times or bad times. Let's bear witness to the word and work of the Lord in our lives!

Day 18 Mar 6

Passage: Gospel of John 15:28-29

The Lord Jesus gave us a precious promise that the Spirit of Truth and Holiness would come to us and testify for the Lord Jesus. We find it hard to explain what the Holy Spirit looks like. He cannot be categorized or shaped by us. But we do know that He came to us to play a positive role as a witness for Jesus. Therefore, we realize that we are not alone but have the Holy Spirit beside us in this spiritual battle. The Lord Jesus said clearly that He would send the Holy Spirit from God the Father to bear witness with us. What the Holy Spirit can do is far beyond our imagination. How He provides and guides believers is far beyond our imagination.

Our faith in preaching the gospel is deeply rooted in these teachings: He promised that the Holy Spirit of infinite power and might is already with us, among us regardless of the circumstances that we are in. He wants us to understand that by the presence of the Holy Spirit, we should and are able to bear witness in all situations. Although the world is unfriendly and even hostile, we are not to judge or condemn the world. Instead, we are to continue proclaiming to the world what the Lord said and did. Let us trust in the Holy Spirit and bear witness for the Lord as His disciples! Let us bear this in mind – people believe in the Lord not because of our persuasive speech but the Holy Spirit who enables them to understand and believe.

PRAYER: Abba, Father, it is our privilege to be called by You to share the life of the Lord Jesus, walk with Him, and bear witness in the world. We plead that your mercy be on us. Let us once again be united with You and dwell in You through the Lord Jesus and Your Spirit of Truth. And only in You can we bear witness to Your name. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Day 19 Mar 7

Passage: Gospel of John 16:1-4

In Chapter 15, the Lord revealed to us that witnesses for the Lord were destined to be persecuted because the world was hostile to the Lord. In 16: 2, Jesus predicted in more detail, "They will put you out of the synagogues. Indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God." His words came true. The disciples of the first generation were persecuted, driven out of the synagogues by their fellow Jews, isolated and abandoned by their community, and even sentenced to death. In short, they sacrificed their lives for the sake of the Lord.

The Lord Jesus did not hide it from the disciples, but told them in advance. Why? In verse 1, Jesus said, "I have said these things to you to keep you from falling away." In verse 4, He said, "But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told them to you." Jesus did not give belated advice but warned them in advance. It takes a prophet to tell others well before things happen, and Jesus was one of them.

The persecution that Jesus and His disciples suffered in the first century can also happen in our century. When we serve with zeal, everything might not necessarily be fine. On the contrary, the people around us may not appreciate our work or accept us. When we encounter rejection or even opposition,

do not be surprised, do not doubt, back down, be afraid or even take revenge. Because we know that the Lord has experienced and faced the same situation as us and He is with us.

In summary, it is a bonus to have favourable results when preaching the gospel. If you face many obstacles while evangelising, it is normal. Because the world hates you.

PRAYER: Oh my Lord, do strengthen us!

Day 20 Mar 8

Passage: Gospel of John 16:5-16:16

When the disciples heard the Lord Jesus telling them that He would soon depart from them to the Father, they were so troubled that no one insisted on finding out where he was going (16: 5-6). It was understandable that the disciples were reluctant to say goodbye to their beloved Jesus and felt sad. Furthermore, they were troubled and saddened by the fact that their faith would be challenged due to living in a hostile world (16:2). Jesus knew that their hearts were burdened, so He shared more details with them. His departure would actually be good for them and they would be able to find comfort in hearing that the Advocate (the Counsellor or Helper) was coming to them. Apart from providing them comfort, the Advocate would help, protect and assist them.

During the Lent period, we reflect on and examine our faith and our relationship with God through spiritual practices such as reflection, prayer, contemplation and confession. If you notice that you have walked away from God little by little by slacking in your devotion, and your daily life does not please God nor do you follow the Bible's teachings, will you be filled with sadness or anxiety like the disciples and thus thirst for His presence, help and comfort? Or are you completely indifferent?

If you have been troubled and burdened by severe challenges, trials and hardships in your faith and life for the sake of the

Lord Jesus during this period, do remember that the Lord Jesus never overlooks the difficulties you are facing or your perseverance. The Advocate sent by Jesus will be with you always, will help and strengthen you so that you can overcome all your sorrows and burdens, and turn sorrow into Joy.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for sending us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to come and become our strength and help, turning all our sorrows into joy.

Day 21 Mar 9

Passage: Gospel of John 16:5-16:16

"And when He comes, He will prove the world wrong concerning sin and righteousness and judgment." (16: 8) It is not easy to understand this verse as it has various interpretations, especially the phrase "prove the world wrong" (NET). It can be translated as "knowing one's guilt", "testified to the mistake committed", "convict the world of guilt". The verb "prove" hence encompasses the meanings of knowing one's guilt, convicting sin, and revealing sin. In addition, this verse shows the Lord Jesus' focus on the power of the Holy Spirit rather than revelation of its mystery. He sent the Holy Spirit as an Advocate to man. The Holy Spirit not only helps and defends the believers, it also makes known to man God's amazing grace by proving them wrong, convicting them of their guilt and revealing their sins.

When we fall into sin carelessly, whether intentionally or unintentionally, the Holy Spirit reproaches and exhorts us in different ways, so that we may see and recognize our sins. Are you willing to hear and accept the reproach and exhortation of the Holy Spirit? Are you willing to sincerely seek the pardon and forgiveness of the Lord Jesus in humility, submission and repentance? Or will you neglect the voice of the Holy Spirit and chart your own course?

Thanks be to God for His amazing grace. The Bible tells us that He is compassionate and merciful, and He demonstrates great loyal love. (Psalm 86:15, 103: 8) When we are willing to submit ourselves and repent humbly, we will receive the help, support and blessings from the Holy Spirit, so that we will be reconciled to God again.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for sending us the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to dwell amongst us and help us to recognize our sins and to receive God's amazing grace.

Day 22 Mar 10

Passage: Gospel of John 16:5-16:16

"Concerning sin, because they do not believe in me; concerning righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; and concerning judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned." (16: 9-11) After summarizing the work of the Advocate, the Holy Spirit in verse 8, the Lord Jesus elaborated to His disciples on the meaning of "concerning sin", "concerning righteousness" and "concerning judgment". The Lord Jesus seemed to indicate the reason for "sin" or the fall and corruption of man as disbelief. The Holy Spirit convicts man of this sin of disbelief, which results in isolation from God.

The Lord Jesus carried out the will of the Father, died for us on the cross, accomplished the divine mission of redemption, and returned to the Father and was wholly accepted. This confirms the "righteousness" of the Lord Jesus before God, which is granted to those who trust in Him through His death for our sins and through His resurrection (Romans 4:25). The Holy Spirit helps men to understand that this is the main way to "righteousness," and what is meant by true "righteousness." The fact that the ruler of this world had been "condemned" indicates the victory of the Lord Jesus, who renews and brings

creation into good order. The Holy Spirit convicts men of guilt by “judgement”, which leads to repentance and salvation.

Therefore, through the conviction (judgment) of the Holy Spirit, we know what separates us from Him due to our disbelief (sin). We must turn to the Lord Jesus to repent and seek His mercy and deliverance once again. The Holy Spirit helps us to be “justified” and be a person after His heart.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for sending us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who convicts us of our guilt of disbelief. Thank you for your deliverance, for we are justified and called to be a people after Your heart.

Day 23 Mar 12

Passage: Gospel of John 16:5-16:16

Please pay special attention to verse 13 where the translation should be "the Spirit of truth... will guide you INTO all truth" (NET). There are 2 interpretations: He guides them to deepen the understanding of the truth that they had already received from him; or He guides them "INTO the truth" to understand the whole truth completely. In summary, Jesus told His disciples that the Spirit of truth He sent would guide and illuminate them to understand His truth, even though they could not instantly and completely understand the truth or the message of the kingdom of God He taught in the world.

Jesus indicated that all His teachings came from God the Father, and the Holy Spirit would speak whatever He hears from Jesus and would glorify Jesus (16:14). The Holy Spirit not only plays the role to guide and illuminate men to understand the truth of incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit also continues Jesus' works and the Great Mission, and will see to the full realization of God's redemption of His entire creation. The Holy Spirit continues to testify for and glorify Jesus in the world in various roles and functions.

The Holy Spirit of truth, please set our hearts on fire in longing for the truth of God's kingdom. Reveal all the truth to us, make

known all the hidden treasures, guide us to understand His teachings and grace, and enable us to testify for and glorify the Lord Jesus in the world by the strength and wisdom granted by the Holy Spirit.

PRAYER: Dear Lord Jesus, thank You for sending to us the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, who guides and illuminates us to understand Your truth and enables us to testify for and glorify You.

Day 24 Mar 13

Passage: Gospel of John 16:17-33

Jesus told His disciples “In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me.” His disciples were confused as to what He meant by the two instances of “a little while”. Jesus then clarified that in the first instance of “a little while”, it would be the time of His death. There would be much grieving for his disciples, though for those who were evil, they would be happy to be rid of Him. Yet there would come a second instance of “a little while”, and it would be the time of His resurrection. It would be a time of joy for the disciples, and indeed, it was joy that no one could take away. To explain the relationship of the two “a little while” and their significance, Jesus used the analogy of a pregnant woman giving birth. Her time of labor was her time of pain because that was the time the baby was coming out. But when the baby was born into the world, it was no longer the time of pain, but the time of joy for the birth of a baby.

This analogy of the pregnant woman was a common one in Jewish literature. Isaiah 66:7-11, “Before she goes into labor, she gives birth; before the pains come upon her, she delivers a son. Who has ever heard of such a thing? Who has ever seen such things? Can country be born in a day or a nation be brought forth in a moment? Yet no sooner is Zion in labor than

she gives birth to her children. Do I bring to the moment of birth and not give delivery? Says the Lord. Do I close up the womb when I bring to delivery? Says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her all you who mourn over her. For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts, you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance.”

PRAYER: O Lord, we thank you because of your promises.

Day 25 Mar 14

Passage: Gospel of John 16:17-33

It is natural for people to desire good times, rather than bad times. It would be strange for one to prefer pain and suffering over laughter and joy. This is understandable, and this mentality often translates into our prayers and our decisions in life. We ask God for good things to happen to us, and we hope that our decisions enable good outcomes. It is also why we have difficulty comprehending sufferings.

Isaiah 66:7-11 shows that the restoration of Israel was like the birth of a child. And when that day comes, God will bring about smooth delivery, just as God will bring about the restoration of Israel to completion. Based on Jesus' analogy, we can now understand the restoration of Israel as the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. At Jesus' death, the disciples might feel pain and grief. But Isaiah's prophecy reveals that God will deliver the baby, and the people of the new nation will be born. This is the resurrection of Jesus.

Therefore, we understand the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. It is to bring about the birth of a new Israel. But the analogy of the pregnant woman also shows us the relationship between the two instances of "a little while." A woman cannot give birth without the pain of labor. The pain of labor is there to bring forth the birth of a child. Though each event happens in its own time, both are closely related. In the

same way, Jesus' resurrection cannot happen without Jesus' death, and Jesus' death brings forth the reality of Jesus' resurrection. For Jesus, His death was a certainty in time, just as His resurrection was also a certainty in time. The occurrence of these two events was a predetermined reality in God's time. In the Gospel of John, Jesus is not only the historical Jesus but also the exalted Christ in heaven. Hence, Jesus transcends time to speak of His imminent death and resurrection. His aim is so that His disciples would be comforted in their time of grief during His death.

PRAYER: O Lord, may we persevere through the bad times, and rejoice in the good times.

Day 26 Mar 15

Passage: Gospel of John 16:17-33

Jesus told His disciples that their grief would only be for a little while, and at His resurrection, all their grief would turn into joy. Their suffering and grieving was a certainty in time because of His death, but precisely because of His death, they would experience great joy because they would witness His resurrection. This was the joy that nobody could take away because the resurrection of Jesus is eternal. In their time of grief, they must persist and hold on to their faith, because just as His death was real, His resurrection was real, and their time of everlasting joy would come. The joy of a baby far outweighs the pain of labor. In the same sense, the joy that the disciples would experience would far outweigh the grief they had at His death.

Ironically, the best way to appreciate this joy is to appreciate the depth of the grief that death brings. Think about the pain you experience when you lose a loved one. Think about the pain of parting. There is no sorrow greater than this. Yet such is the joy of resurrection that you will forget about the grief that was so strong and painful before. If the pain of death is deep, the joy of resurrection is truly beyond measure. How can this joy be so powerful? Because just as death signals temporal parting, resurrection implies the everlasting union the disciples will have with Jesus. Hence this joy of resurrection is important for the Christian faith and must be

experienced by every believer. We are now no longer in doubt or fear for we have witnessed the resurrection of Christ. In Him, in the due time of God, is the certainty of our salvation. Pray for the regeneration of the Spirit, pray for the kingdom of God, and pray for the unity of the Church. Ask and you shall receive, and your joy will be complete. May God bless each one of you with the abundant grace of His time.

PRAYER: O Lord, help us with our pain and bring us hope for Your joy.

Day 27 Mar 16

Passage: Gospel of John 16:17-33

The joy of resurrection must be complete. How do we make this joy complete? Jesus said “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. Until now, you have not asked me anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.” So to make this joy of resurrection complete, we must ask God in Jesus’ name and receive. Jesus stated that on that day, which is the time of resurrection, you would no longer ask Him anything. This means that it would be the moment of truth, and all the purpose of His coming on earth would be unveiled. The disciples would have no more questions and doubts. This is indeed the moment we all have been hoping for. The day when we live in such joy and there are no more questions. All questioning grows silent, and nothing needs explanation. This is the experience of living in such joy. What this also implies is that when the disciples witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ, they would know exactly what to ask of God in Jesus’ name.

What is it that they must ask of God, and what does it mean to ask it in Jesus’ name? This is the fundamental question as it is what we will receive that will make our joy in Jesus’ resurrection complete. To ask in Jesus’ name is to ask in the

full power of God's own name. From John 17:11-12, we see that Jesus' name is God's name. It represents divine authority and power. Firstly, they could ask for the New Kingdom of Israel. Secondly, they could pray that this new kingdom, the church, be one with Christ, just as The Father and Son are one. Thirdly, with the imminent departure of Christ, the disciples could pray for the coming of the Spirit.

PRAYER: O Lord, we pray for your Kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Day 28 Mar 17

Passage: Gospel of John 16:17-33

Jesus understood that the time for His death must happen, just as there would be a time for His resurrection. There was a time for the disciples to grief, but there must also come the time for the disciples to rejoice. And when the time of rejoicing comes, it would be the time for them to ask for the new kingdom and the coming of the Spirit. And just as the bad times would pass, the good times promised by God must come. And be it bad times or good times, it is our time to respond and to act in God's will. There is the time to grief, and God allows such times. But we too must accept such times, as we await the time to rejoice. Do not be frustrated by the times when you mourn while evil rejoices. For when the time of rejoicing comes, it is a joy that is far-exceeding, and one that nobody can take away.

It is natural to always hope for good times. But life for everybody is such that they will have their portions of sorrow and their portions of joy. Just as it is a certainty for Jesus to face death to achieve resurrection, we too must go through patches of death for resurrection to come. There are times of anguish where we allow our old selves to die for the new self to be reborn. There are times of grieving when we part with our old ways to pursue a new path. There are times of pain

when we separate from our comfort zone to join a new family. We may not understand when bad times come, just as the disciples did not understand why Christ had to die. But be patient when these times come, and persevere, my brothers and sisters. For Christ has resurrected and so must we.

PRAYER: O Lord, may we find strength in each new day in the power of your resurrection.

Day 29 Mar 19

Passage: Gospel of John 17:1-10

Chapter 16 captures Jesus' words for the disciples, words that were extremely intimate, and about the future when He would no longer be around. Chapter 17 encapsulates Jesus' prayer to the Father, and we can glean from this prayer the extremely intimate bond between Him and the Father.

The way Jesus prayed was no different from any other Jew praying. He stood firm, put on His prayer shawl, looked upward to heaven and prayed out loud. And because it was being prayed out loud, the disciples were able to hear how Jesus prayed to the Father, even hearing how Jesus prayed for them.

"The time has come," this also appeared in 2:4, referring to the time of Jesus' public ministry on earth, and it was mentioned in 13:1 as well. In the Gospel of John, this phrase very often alluded to Jesus' death and resurrection, and in 12:23 it referred to the time when the Son of God would be glorified. So when Jesus said to the Father 'Glorify your Son,' in actuality, He was expressing His 'obedience' to the Father's will and His commitment to go through death and resurrection. What the Father does, He does in His own timing and with His own objective. And throughout Jesus' life, He obeyed the Father and did the work of His Father. When we understand

the meaning of “So that Your Son may glorify You,” it will deeply move us. For He asked the Father to glorify His Son, but ultimately He wanted the Father to be glorified.

In the Gospel of John, we observed that Jesus often spoke of His Father as “the one who sent me”. When Jesus spoke, He clearly stated that He was not speaking for His own sake; rather He was speaking what the Father wanted Him to. This was the same for the Holy Spirit: He will receive from Jesus and tell it to the disciples (16:14). When reading Chapters 16-17 repeatedly, our hearts are moved, for we can have a glimpse of the intimate communication and love amongst the Holy Trinity.

If we could take time regularly to meditate upon the intimate communication and love amongst the Holy Trinity, and to realize that Jesus in fact is interceding for us, wanting us to have a taste or share of the love they have for each other (17:23-26), this will invariably illuminate our lives. Because we will know how blessed we are, being engulfed in the love of the Holy Trinity, and indeed are beloved and blessed ones.

PRAYER: Dear God, how blessed we are, that we are being engulfed in the love of the Holy Trinity.

Day 30 Mar 20

Passage: Gospel of John 17:1-10

The gospel of John recorded the least number of Jesus' miracles, 7 in total. But in 17:2, Jesus revealed the vastness of His authority, with all flesh and blood coming under His rule. Such immense authority was given to allow Him to do the Father's will, which He did, and this was to grant everlasting life to those whom God had given Him.

What does it mean to have everlasting life? Jesus explained that this means flesh and blood, ordinary people, being able to know that God is the real God, to know Jesus had come from the Father, and how the Father had been manifested in His life (14:8-10). Knowing Jesus is to know the Father. "No one has ever seen God. The only one, himself God, who is in closest fellowship with the Father, has made God known." (1:18)

If we were to read 17:2 in isolation, we would not have been that easily persuaded. But if we were to re-read the gospels, we would gradually notice how Jesus went about proclaiming that He was a 'good shepherd,' "I have come so that they may have life," "I am the bread of life," "whoever drinks some of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again." All these serve to proclaim that He is not just larger than life, but indeed He is life itself, and one must come to Him in order to

receive life. Yes, this is very true, for the Samaritan woman after meeting Jesus experienced liberation of life and was no longer under bondage. While Nicodemus, on hearing Jesus' sharing, understood that Jesus' words were from above, and could give life to those who heard him. As for those multitudes who were fed in the wilderness, they also heard Jesus declaring loudly "The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (6:54). Nonetheless, all these can come to fruition only because Jesus received the will of the Father, and he was committed to go through death and resurrection.

You may have met some people who regard themselves as fortunate, having met benefactors who helped them in their lives. But Jesus is the God-sent Benefactor to each and every one of us. Do you now know that He is life, He came, so as to give us life? Do you know that He is the one who can enable mankind, from whatever walks of life, or whatever life experience, to be fully alive? Have you experienced this already?

PRAYER: Jesus Christ, You are eternal life, please let me come to You to receive life!

Day 31 Mar 21

Passage: Gospel of John 17:1-10

Those who followed Jesus were the people whom the Father had given to Jesus, and they were the ones who had obeyed the Father's Word. Often times, we want to cross-check, as to who was 'saved' or 'chosen', but in Jesus' intimate prayer to the Father, we instead discover that those who obeyed the Father's Word were the people whom the Father had given to Jesus.

In verses 6-8, Jesus expressed this even more vividly, showing that while there are differences between Him and the Father, He is equal with the Father, although He is not independent of the Father. What He is conveying is that He is from the Father, and that He obeys the Father.

This was how Jesus lived His life, He understood the Father and He obeyed the Father. For us who are followers of Jesus, we pray as well, but praying does not preclude us from fulfilling our duties and responsibilities. Prayer doesn't make God listen to us and follow our will, instead those who pray should obey God's will.

Perhaps some of us have been Christians for a long time, but have stagnated, perhaps feeling that God did not listen to our prayers. Some of us even took it to heart when we felt that God did not listen to our prayers and we felt dejected. Upon reading this passage carefully, its message would invariably upset us. The richness of one's life is not about obtaining all which we deem as valuable. Jesus' prayer over here is not about asking God incessantly, so that one would receive what he or she considers best, and superior to what others would receive. No, praying allows us to come before the Father, to closely examine His will, and through this intimate following and obeying, we would gradually let go of what we deem as the best, and walk ever more closely with the Holy Trinity. When we allow the Word of the Father, and correspondingly also the words of Jesus to reverberate more and more within us, we will become more and more like Jesus.

PRAYER: Father, may your will be done in my life, in our church.

Day 32 Mar 22

Passage: Gospel of John 17:1-10

Those whom the Father had given to Jesus were not of the world, but of God. How is this so? Firstly, because Jesus and the Father were one from the beginning. Secondly, “I have been glorified by them” (verse 10). This verb ‘glorified’ is in perfect tense, meaning that this is a fact. As translated in NRSV: “I have been glorified in them.” Let us follow-up with this question: How was God glorified in them?

Looking at the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ prayer, we understand that Jesus was about to return to His heavenly home. He was about to be put on the cross. Very soon, He would be defenseless and unable to do anything, even what he earlier said, “a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies”(12:24), would materialize in Him. He prayed for the disciples, as His life and those of the disciples were in union and one. His glory would be the disciples’ glory, and vice versa. This was the concern and the future that Jesus had for the disciples. This would not equate to Jesus not fulfilling His responsibilities, but that He had completed what He could, and it was time to faithfully entrust the work in the Father’s Hands.

Prayers that are truly responsible would be akin to this prayer of Jesus. Even though He had completed His work, He also understood that what He had accomplished would be subject to the constraints of man's time and space, and it was necessary for Him to return to the Father. And the Father would send forth the Holy Spirit to continue the work.

vangelists of the past, or churches in all parts of the world, or families of believers, would eventually come to this moment, where we would see our own limitations. We will do our utmost to accomplish what we can in our lifetime, but one day we would have to return to the Father. Sometimes, things can go wrong or not happen according to our utmost desires. Yet we can find comfort in Jesus' prayer as well as Moses' prayer. "May our sovereign God extend his favor to us! Make our endeavors successful! Yes, make them successful!" (Psalms 90:17) How important is this that we can entrust everything to God with resolute, may these words be our prayers in each and every day of our lives.

PRAYER: Oh God, may You establish the work of our hands.
Yes, establish the work of our hands.

Day 33 Mar 23

Passage: Gospel of John 17:11-19

The work of Jesus on earth was coming to an end. He came from the Father, and he would return to the Father soon. He would not be in the world, but His followers who had followed him for three years still lived in the world. It was a complicated scenario. In this passage, we observe Jesus interceding like a high priest on behalf of the disciples whom He cared for a lot.

In the entire gospel of John, only in 17:11 did Jesus address God as “Holy Father”. Jesus prayed in the capacity of a Son, praying that the Holy Father would protect the disciples by the power of His name. And that they might be one just as Jesus and the Holy Father are one. The basis of oneness, is the oneness of Jesus and His Father. Throughout Jesus’ life, He obeyed the commands of the Father as a son, obeyed His words, and accomplished the will of the Father. For more than three years, these disciples received the word of God through the teachings of Jesus. All the disciples were God’s because they received the word of God. Therefore they should follow the word of the Father and do His will. Because Jesus Himself had already set an example for the disciples to unite with the Father.

From John chapters 14-15, we can see the oneness that Jesus was talking about also applies to the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy

Spirit that unites us with the Father, and it is the word of the Father that keeps us in this relationship. Just like the relationship between the vine and its branches, now Jesus is the vine, we are the branches, and we have this oneness with Jesus.

In today's passage we are once again reminded by the prayer of Jesus, that there should be unity between believers, just as Father and Son are one. Sometimes in life we feel lonely because of difficulties or setbacks that we encounter, but the prayer of Jesus here is a good wakeup call. For Jesus' sake we are to be one with other believers! Perhaps we are never aware that God has already set up a "system" for us, to help us get renewal and empowerment, and that this is possible because we are connected with Christ.

PRAYER: Thank you Father, that through Jesus we have the example of oneness. Now we understand that because of Jesus, we can be united with other believers.

Day 34 Mar 24

Passage: Gospel of John 17:11-19

17:12 When I was with them I kept them safe and watched over them in your name that you have given me. Not one of them was lost except the one destined for destruction, so that the scripture could be fulfilled. (NET)

In this passage we notice a very wonderful thing. During Jesus' public ministry, he called 12 disciples and He used the name that God had given Him to keep them safe. Indeed none of the 12 were arrested or beheaded while they followed him.

However, what would happen in the future? What would happen to them when Jesus had to leave them and go to the Father? When that happened, who would "cover" them? It was at a moment like this that Jesus prayed, "I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but that you keep them safe from the evil one"(17:15) . Jesus knew very well that after He had departed, if the whole cohort of disciples were all arrested and killed, there would be no more "witness" left to tell others of His three years of public ministry, passion and death. Someone had to keep them alive in the days to come, to share openly what Jesus had done, preached and privately taught the disciples. This was of utmost importance.

By the time Jesus and His disciples had the Passover dinner, Jesus had already made known that there was one destined for destruction, who would act as the informer to the higher authorities. He was troubled in His heart when he mentioned it to the Father (cf 13:21).

From today's reading, we understand that the familiar phrase that we use often: "keep them safe" is no small thing, it requires Jesus to use the name that God has given Him, and this is directly related to protecting those who are sharing the gospel of Jesus. This is a great encouragement to us when we teach others what Jesus taught and lead them to obey, for He will be with us (Matthew 28:18-20).

PRAYER: Thank you Father for the assurance given to us that we know you will keep us when we deliver the gospel message of Jesus.

Day 35 Mar 26

Passage: Gospel of John 17:11-19

But now I am coming to you, and I am saying these things in the world, so they may experience my joy completed in themselves. (NET, John 17:13)

Here, we see that Jesus knew He was going to God the Father, but He wanted the disciples to rejoice. Those who are familiar with the Bible will know that shortly after Jesus' prayer of intercession, He was arrested, tried, flogged, and crucified. This was a very painful and shameful thing to people, and should be avoided at all costs.

But Jesus said there are many dwelling places in His Father's house and He was going away to make ready a place for us (14:2). And He said the disciples would know the way He was going.

Let us spend some time during this Lent period to meditate on what Jesus said. His words represented his attitude towards what would happen next. First, he knew clearly that He was going back to the Father. Second, He was joyful, and He wanted His disciples to be filled with His joy.

How could Jesus be joyful? If we read the Gospel of John again and again, we will have a strong impression that He had spoken what the Father wanted Him to say, and He did what the Father wanted Him to do, and since He had done what He ought to do, He would make His journey back home. Jesus' attitude toward "death" stemmed from His obedience to God the Father, and He consistently listened to and obeyed the Father throughout His life. The time had come, and He was willing to submit everything to the Father.

What kind of inspiration can we gain from Jesus? Perhaps some of us are trapped in the traditional Chinese definitions of what is "good", things such as longevity, having lots of children and grandchildren, being married to the same person and living together to a ripe old age. If any of these are lacking, will there be deep regrets in your life? Let us turn our eyes to Jesus. Jesus had lived His life for God in the capacity of His Son. His life inspires and challenges our values.

PRAYER: Jesus, we often struggle and feel entangled when facing pain and suffering in life. Yet your wisdom, courage and love-filled life is truly inspirational, and we can learn so much from you on how to live!

Day 36 Mar 27

Passage: Gospel of John 17:11-19

From Jesus' prayer in verses 14-19, we see that the disciples "do not belong to the world," and in time to come they would suffer the world's opposition or hostility because of Jesus. As these things would eventually happen, Jesus prayed for them and said, "And I set myself apart on their behalf, so that they too may be set apart in the truth".

To consecrate something is to set apart people/apparatus, and after the act of consecration, the person/apparatus would belong to God.

Jesus consecrated Himself, offered Himself to God, and He prayed to God that He would send the disciples into the world, just as how God had sent Him into the world.

The disciples would soon be sent to be Jesus' witnesses, and all that He said and did would be passed down by them to those who had never seen Jesus. How were they going to accomplish this? From the words of Jesus, we know that the Holy Spirit was coming and would remind them of what Jesus had said. As a church that exists more than 2000 years after the crucifixion of Jesus, we need to ensure that the Word of Jesus is always with us, is precious to us, and is something we often see, think about, proclaim, and share. Jesus was fully

human, God incarnate. Regardless of how busy our lives are, He must always be in the center.

Some people tend to complain that their children are too busy and have no time to visit them. Similarly, do we have time for God? Can we use the time that we spend waiting for others to visit us to let the Word of our Lord and His works surround us, so that we naturally want to share it with others? If this does happen, we will gradually look like one who is consecrated to God. Jesus wants you and I to be sanctified in the truth, every day, every week, every year. Whether we are healthy or sick, living at home or in a hospital, we are all sanctified in the truth.

PRAYER: Jesus, may we be sanctified by your Word, that your Word may be in our hearts, that we may have the Word to share with others.

Day 37 28 Mar

Passage: Gospel of John 17:20-26

Today we come to the third and final section of the prayer, where Jesus prayed for those who would come to faith after he had returned to the Father. In this section of the prayer, our Lord concentrates on the ultimate goal of His entire work, namely, that all who believe in Him may be one as He and the Father are one. In deeds and in words, Jesus had never stopped conveying the centrality and importance of oneness. At the beginning of his earthly ministry, Jesus walked into the waters; received the baptism administered by one of his creatures, in order to become *one* with those whom He had come to help. Towards the end, He presented a picture of the vine and the branches, and stressed that we the branches can be fruitful only when connected to and are one with the vine.

Jesus' prayer has more to say about oneness than just its centrality and importance. Although the faith of future believers was being highlighted (v.20), it was after all not the believers' faith but God's love (vv.23 & 26) which made the oneness that Jesus was asking for a possibility. Jesus, who is one with the father, demonstrated this love by showing his own undying love for his disciples. From the prayer, we read that he gave (v.22) and shared (vv.24 & 26) with his followers all that he had. To put it differently, the unity that Jesus is

calling for is associated neither with coerciveness or cohesiveness. It is not to be achieved by enforcing rules and regulations or by agreeing on common grounds in terms of theology or practices, but by first receiving and then responding to the goodness of God.

What have been our bases for upholding unity in the Christian community, or the reasons for neglecting it?

PRAYER: Lord, you have shown us with your life and work the value and possibility of unity. Help us to live our lives your way.

Day 38 Mar 29, Maundy Thursday

Passage: Gospel of John 17:20-26

Let's begin from where we left off yesterday: unity is about responding to the goodness of God. Although not at all to be discounted, "response" herein refers not so much to a corresponding affection, a deep sense of gratitude, a certain degree of conviction or the readiness to commit oneself to a course of action. "Response" refers primarily to *observable acts* being performed. Jesus displayed "complete harmony and concurrence between the Father and the Son in carrying out the work of salvation assigned to Him by the Father" (Ridderbos); the same is to be seen in the life of the church and her members.

Our acts of "response" should not be products of pushes from either our cultural or social environment. But in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus, they should be expressions of our adhering to revelation. Our primary source of God's revelation—the Bible—possesses an iterating power. The Holy Spirit speaks God's will into the church and her members repeatedly. The supposed result would be that the world will then see the church united in purpose, in love, and in action undertaken with and for each other – demonstrated through the washing of each other's feet on this day. Within Jesus' earnest prayer therefore embeds a vision for believers of all generations to

hear the voice of the Lord, to feel for and to stand with Him in purpose and in action.

This vision beseeches us to become attentive followers. In a world that rushes us on and on, the call to live lives in one with God reminds us once again to slow down, to be consistent in the discipline of tuning in to God, to discern His hands in matters, to track His progress and to play our part.

During this entire Lent season, are there areas where the Lord seems to be speaking to us repeatedly? And have we heeded his promptings?

PRAYER: Lord, may we “do it” when it’s our time to do so.

Day 39 Mar 30, Good Friday

Passage: Gospel of John 17:20-26

Jesus cast the vision (see Day 38), but how is it to be realized? The short answer is encapsulated in a word that calls for some unpacking – glory. Jesus mentioned in verse 24 that He wanted His disciples to be with Him, to see His glory. It is the kind of glory that He had before incarnation and will again possess when He returns to the Father. But then, Jesus also said that He had given the disciples His glory while He was with them (v.22); a glory that would bring about a perfect unity (v.23). How is the giving of glory to be understood?

To be sure, it cannot be referring to a single impartation; nowhere in the bible do we read about Jesus filling up the disciples with glory like filling a balloon with helium. Rather, glory herein refers to the manifestation of Jesus' authority and power in performing His tasks in the world. The giving of glory would in turn refer to the disciples – in their association with their rabbi – taking part in the performance of the same tasks when Jesus was among them (e.g. see Luke 10), and continuing the work after He had returned to the Father. Disciples of all generations were being called to join the Lord in helping, encouraging and admonishing, healing and comforting people in need; to perform tasks that might involve lowly service and even suffering for the Lord's sake. But most fundamentally, we are called to join the Lord in

obeying the will of the Father and ushering people into the sphere of salvific life. All of these will not be done in lone struggles, for our Lord has promised us assistance, that He will listen to all our supplications and intercessions, and that we will do even greater work.

As we observe Good Friday, let's reflect on our journey of obedience and on how we have been co-working with the Lord.

PRAYER: Lord, you showed it, and we have benefited from it. We pray that you would have us join you as you continue to do it, and we trust that you are hearing us now when we pray about it.

Day 40 Mar 31, Holy Saturday

Passage: Gospel of John 17:20-26

Reading once again the closing section of the prayer on Holy Saturday, we see readily how Jesus' obedience to the Father and His love for Him – and for us – has afforded us the wondrous gift that we can never afford ourselves. Jesus said that He “will make it known” (v.26; NASB & NRSV), referring to Him making known the name of the Father through His Passion. We read in the gospel that Jesus was not only reticent but resolute through the ordeal. This is something of no surprise, since our Lord Jesus had confessed that to do the will of the Father, which included making the Father known in the way the Father had wanted, was to Him none other than His food (4:32). In short, doing the work of the Father sustains Jesus and fulfils his deepest needs .

Making the Father and His name known is and will still be Jesus' preoccupation. We understand it as so because the phrase is found among words of prayer asking for the disciples to be with Him when He has risen and is in glory (vv.24-26). Our reading is made more certain when we arrive at the final words of the prayer, “and I in them” (v.26). The risen Lord is *in* His followers, the love that the Father has loved him with now flows through him into the lives and being of the followers. In other words, this love that had manifested through the sending of the Son is now continuously revealed in the lives of

the followers, seen through the continuous redeeming and shaping of the lives of the followers.

PRAYER: O Lord, as we prepare to celebrate Easter, we give thanks for what you have afforded us. May you help us to be ever willing to respond to your redeeming and shaping of our lives. We also give thanks that we are made a blessed people and pray that we shall be a blessing unto others.

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