

Sheep, be watchful! Love and care for one another as you seek to please Christ in all you do!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, I am want to be among Your sheep on the day Jesus returns. Help me turn from my sin and pride towards the life of purpose and hope that's only found in You. Amen.

October 28 – Sheep and Goats

READ

Mark 13:32-37

Matthew 24:36-25:46

Luke 21:34-38

Matthew 25:32-34, 41, *“All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on His right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by My Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.’ ... Then He will say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”*

THINK

Did you know that in biblical times sheep and goats were almost indistinguishable in appearance? Only shepherds could typically look among the throngs of these animals and recognize their flock. Surprising, isn't it? In our experience, they are easily distinguishable due to specialized breeding. But outwardly similar or not, they're very different animals. Sheep aren't intelligent creatures; they need a shepherd's guidance to survive the elements. Conversely, goats are highly independent, unruly, and even downright destructive. In fact, the job of a goatherd isn't to keep the goats from harm, but to follow them prevent them from causing it!

So, what's the point in all this? On the day Jesus returns, He will first separate all people into two categories: sheep and goats. Although they may be similar in appearance within the herd, only the Shepherd can distinguish His flock. The sheep, those who have a personal relationship with the Savior, will move on to eternal life. But to the goats, He will say, "Depart from Me" and spend eternity in a terrifying place of utter isolation and doom — yikes!

It's important to mention that many "goats" think they're sheep and will be greatly surprised on that day. They will say, "But we were good people, we didn't seek to harm others...." But did they love God and protect the unity of His people? Did they desire to obey the Lord and live according to His will? No! That's why Jesus said, "What you didn't do for the least of these you didn't do for Me."

So, here's the critical question: Are you sure you're a sheep? Or, like a goat, are you still trying to do life by your own will and way? If so, decide today to truly invite the Good Shepherd into your heart and submit to His Lordship. Don't hesitate because we'll never know the day or hour of His return.

Lord Jesus, Thank You for shedding Your blood on the cross for my sins that I may look forward to the hope of heaven. When I fear uncertainty, remind me that You are in control. Place in my spirit an urgency to share who You are with others. I place my faith and trust in You alone.
Amen.

October 26 – All In!

READ

Mark 12:28-44

Matthew 22:34-23:39

Luke 20:41-21:4

Luke 21:3-4, *“Truly I tell you,” He said, “this poor widow has put in more than all the others. All these people gave their gifts out of their wealth; but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on.”*

THINK

When it comes to generosity, many assume the most generous are the ones who give the largest dollar amount. Not so! The poor widow in today's reading is the perfect example. She gave the smallest amount possible – two copper coins equivalent to less than a penny – and yet Jesus states that she gave above and beyond anyone else. Why? She gave everything she had!

Abundant generosity is never determined by the size of the pile — whether it's a mountain or a molehill — but by the heart. Jesus commended the widow's willingness to give and heart for God's house. She was recognized because her offering wasn't superficial, but sacrificial. In Matthew 6, Jesus said, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." While many stored up an earthly wealth of zero eternal value, she stored up treasures for herself in heaven. So, who truly had more? The poor widow!

How about you? Are you all in when it comes to generosity? Would Jesus commend your willingness to sow your resources into the local church? Because you are never more like Him than when you give!

PRAY

Heavenly Father, Reveal the attitude of my heart when it comes to generosity. I recognize that all I have comes from You. Open my eyes to opportunities to give with a willing spirit so that I can lay up treasure in Heaven! Amen.

As Christ-followers, we must be ready to respond to loaded questions when challenged about our faith. Remember to maintain composure, not take offense, and see such moments as opportunities to change the trajectory of not only the question itself but of people's hearts!

PRAY

Lord, When faced with a loaded question, give me wisdom as I respond. Guide me to not put the most value in being right but in being intentional. I pray for opportunities to point others to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 25 – The Loaded Question

READ

Matthew 21:28-22:33

Mark 12:1-27

Luke 20:9-40

Luke 20:20-26, *“Keeping a close watch on Him, they sent spies, who pretended to be sincere. They hoped to catch Jesus in something He said so that they might hand Him over to the power and authority of the governor. So the spies questioned Him: ‘Teacher, we know that You speak and teach what is right and that You do not show partiality but teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. Is it right for us to pay taxes to Caesar or not?’ He saw through their duplicity and said to them, ‘Show me a denarius. Whose image and inscription are on it?’ ‘Caesar’s,’ they replied. He said to them, ‘Then give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.’ They were unable to trap Him in what He had said there in public. And astonished by His answer, they became silent.”*

THINK

Have you ever been posed with a question that only invited you to step into a trap? You're stuck, and no matter what comes out in response, you know you're really just opening your mouth to insert your foot!

- "Do you notice anything different about me today?"
- "Are you always this negative?"
- "Is that really what you plan to do?"
- "Do I look like I've gained weight?"

Smug and eager to "get Jesus good" this time, the spies in today's reading approached Him with a very loaded question. Would Jesus try to usurp Caesar's authority or blaspheme God? It seemed they would get Jesus in hot water with either the Roman authority or the Jews who despised paying taxes to a pagan government. Knowing their intent, Jesus didn't engage in an argument or go into some lengthy theological debate. He got to the heart of the matter with a simple, yet brilliantly illustrated teaching moment!

The point Jesus made was that we don't belong to any earthly master or even ourselves; we are God's. But we are also subject to obeying the authority that God Himself placed over us!

Those listening were astonished. The loaded question backfired and exploded back in the faces of Jesus' opponents, utterly silenced by His response. You can almost hear the disciples fist-bumping and saying, "Burn!"

live out the purpose-packed life He has in store. Seek God, pray for spiritual growth, and surround yourself with people who encourage you to live out active authentic faith.

PRAY

Lord, Help me to have a solid faith so that I may produce Your fruit abundantly. Grant me strength and endurance as I seek to grow more and more like Christ so that I can bring honor to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

October 24 – Fig Tree Faith

READ

John 12:37-50

Mark 11:12-33

Matthew 21:12-27

Luke 19:45-48, 20:1-8

Mark 11:12-14, *“The next morning as they were leaving Bethany, Jesus was hungry. He noticed a fig tree in full leaf a little way off, so He went over to see if He could find any figs. But there were only leaves because it was too early in the season for fruit. Then Jesus said to the tree, ‘May no one ever eat your fruit again!’ And the disciples heard Him say it.”*

THINK

Faux faith can only produce fake fruit!

In Mark 11, Jesus did something curious. He cursed a fig tree in leaf because it bore no fruit. You might be thinking, “Poor fig tree! Why would Jesus curse something he created?” Surely his disciples were thinking the same thing. The next day, Jesus and his disciples passed the same tree and it was totally withered. So, Jesus used the opportunity to teach an object lesson about faith.

Before this, Jesus had humbly entered Jerusalem, as the King of kings on the back of a donkey — who's ever heard of a king riding a mule? As He passed, people laid their cloaks along His path as a sign of honor and shouted “Hosanna!” meaning, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” But as the people celebrated, the guest of honor wasn't pumping fists in the air, shouting “Woohoo,” or enjoying the adoration. His heart hurt; He mourned what only He knew awaited. Less than a week later, the same crowd would be shouting, “Crucify Him!”

Upon entering Jerusalem, Jesus went to the temple and, in an unexpected outburst, emptied the temple courts, angered by all the people who appeared to serve God but were using His house to earn a bit of coin. Jesus was saddened because, like the fruitless fig tree, people seemed to be worshiping God, but they were missing out on true unwavering devotion that only comes from knowing God in an up-close and intimate manner. They were like that poor fig tree! The point: Faux faith might produce leaves, but it can never bear fruit!

So, right now, if you had to illustrate your faith by drawing a plant, what would it look like? Be honest. Would the branch truly be connected to the vine? Would it look good from afar but devoid of produce? Would the branches be dipping from the weight of all the plump produce? No matter the current condition of your “fig tree,” it's not too late to seek God's will and way and

October 23 – Faithful or Faith Fool?

READ

Mark 14:3-9, 11:1-11

Matthew 26:6-13, 21:1-11

John 12:1-36

Luke 19:28-44

John 12:3-5, *“Mary, therefore, took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ‘Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’”*

THINK

It's easy to get distracted and bogged down with so much busyness that God slips from the top slot on our list of priorities. But throughout the Bible, we see that God looks for faithfulness demonstrated through obedience. Our obedience is an expression of our loyalty.

Mary demonstrated pure-hearted devotion as she anointed Jesus with expensive perfume. In a willful act of worship, she recognized Jesus for who He was and openly expressed her faithfulness, her loyalty to God the Son.

Conversely, Judas was a "faith-fool," more concerned with lining his pockets than prioritizing God. Sure, he expressed concern for the poor, but we know that if he was willing to sell out the Savior for silver, it's doubtful that he genuinely cared about anyone but himself. He failed to recognize Jesus for who He was. And, unfortunately, his disloyalty led him to a horrible place.

Here's the truth: everyone shares the destiny of who they choose to worship. Mary found eternal life, and Judas did not. It's a question of faithfulness. Are you a Mary or a Judas? Where does your loyalty lie — with your own self-interests or Christ?

PRAY

Dear God, I know that faithfulness to You is paramount. May my actions always be an expression of my loyalty to You. Thank You for the gift of salvation found through faith in Your Son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

October 22 – Friend of Sinners

READ

Matthew 20:1-34

Luke 18:31-19:27

Luke 19:10, *"The Son of Man came to seek and save the lost."*

THINK

Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, was despised for getting rich by slapping burdensome taxes on his fellow Israelites. He must've been feeling pretty low when he heard that Jesus was passing through the streets of Jericho. With a spark of hope, he quickly ran ahead of the crowd and climbed a tree to get a better look at this rabbi known for His acceptance of sinners and outcasts. Ironically, as he strained to catch a mere glimpse of Jesus, he discovered that it was him who Jesus had come to see!

Imagine his shock when Jesus stopped, looked up at Zacchaeus, called him by name, and lovingly said, "Come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." Upon hearing this, people shook their heads in disbelief and mumbled aloud because Jesus was going to the house of a notorious sinner! Then Jesus looked out at the crowd and responded with today's verse.

Luke 19:10 cuts to the heart of why Jesus came to earth. He had one mission: "To seek and save the lost." Before we knew Him personally, He found us, accepted us "as-is," and offered us a second chance.

You will never look eyes with someone Jesus didn't die for. So, if Jesus came to earth to seek and save the lost, shouldn't that be our mission as well?

PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for seeking me out, loving me, and calling me by name. Today, instill in me a passion for connecting with lost people and provide opportunities for me to share Your message of hope and salvation. In Jesus' name, Amen.