

## November 4 – We Can Only Imagine

### READ

Mark 15:21-41

Matthew 27:32-56

Luke 23:26-49

John 19:17-37

Luke 23:44-46, *“It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ When He had said this, He breathed His last.”*

### THINK

Imagine seeing a battered and beaten Jesus on His way to die the most dishonorable death. Imagine watching as nails are driven into His hands and feet. Imagine your uncertainty and fear as the sky above you grows ominously dark. Imagine your sorrow as Jesus cries out loudly and draws His last breath. And imagine seeing God rip the curtain that once separated the Most Holy Place from top to bottom — an area so sacred that only the high priest is allowed access once a year. Stop and really picture this scene unfolding because Jesus died to give us an all-access pass to the MOST holy place, the throne room of God! We did nothing to deserve it; He did it out of grace.

Jesus is a way maker. His death unlocked the gates of Heaven for whoever calls Him "Lord." However, we don't have to wait until we get there to enter the throne room of God. Every time we pray, seek God's presence and allow His Word to infiltrate our hearts, we are standing before God.

Jesus did the unimaginable, so we would only have to imagine what it's like to pay for our sin ourselves. We did nothing to deserve such grace, but His love is far greater. So, no matter our past, if we place our total trust in Him, we can have a personal relationship with Him today and a brilliant future on that day when we see Him face-to-face!

### PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for doing the unimaginable and bearing the brunt of my sin so that I may stand before Your throne — covered by your grace. Amen.

There is hope. When your voice is drowned out, and nothing seems to make sense, know that God sees you and hears you. He is in control. His will always prevails.

**PRAY**

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the hope that only You can bring. Although life can feel hopeless at times, I know that You are in control and Your will always prevails. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## November 3 – Hope Prevails

### READ

Mark 15:2-20

Matthew 27:11-31

Luke 23:1-25

John 18:28-19:16

Matthew 27:19-25, “...as Pilate was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent him this message: ‘Leave that innocent man alone. I suffered through a terrible nightmare about him last night.’ Meanwhile, the leading priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be put to death. So, the governor asked again, ‘Which of these two do you want me to release to you?’ The crowd shouted back, ‘Barabbas!’ Pilate responded, ‘Then what should I do with Jesus who is called the Messiah?’ They shouted back, ‘Crucify him!’ ‘Why?’ Pilate demanded. ‘What crime has he committed?’ But the mob roared even louder, ‘Crucify him!’ Pilate saw that he wasn’t getting anywhere and that a riot was developing. So, he sent for a bowl of water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, ‘I am innocent of this man’s blood. The responsibility is yours!’ And all the people yelled back, ‘We will take responsibility for his death — we and our children!’”

### THINK

It seems those with the loudest voices often have the least desirable things to say, while those who could add wisdom and calm to the situation wait their turn to speak — and are often overlooked or quieted when they attempt to do so. It leaves us to wonder why more sensible minds fail to prevail. But without hope, those who could intervene often just wash their hands of the situation instead.

As we read the depiction of the crowd — the mob choosing Jesus’ fate of crucifixion — Pilate, the one person who could have shut the crowd down, literally washes his hands of the situation even after a warning from his wife that Jesus was innocent. We can easily imagine the hopelessness felt by Jesus’ followers. Had they been wrong? Surely, He’ll use the miraculous power they saw to heal others, to save himself now...right?

Thankfully, we know the end of the story. And through His ultimate victory, we gain insight into how we can navigate life successfully. When the loudest voices are screaming things that don’t make sense and issues arise that cause us to wonder if God is still here, take heart in the example before us. Even when all seemed lost to His followers, He was in control, knowing the painful journey before Him would bring salvation for those who believe.

## November 2 – From Misstep to Next Step

### READ

Mark 14:53-15:1

Matthew 26:57-27:10

Luke 22:54-71

John 18:25-27

Matthew 26:74-75, *“Then he began to curse and swear, saying, ‘I do not know the Man!’ Immediately a rooster crowed. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, ‘Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.’ So he went out and wept bitterly.”*

### THINK

Throughout the gospels, no other disciple was called out like Peter. Before Jesus’ death and resurrection, Peter was hot-headed, impulsive, and mistaken as often as he was correct. Perhaps it was because he was the only one bold enough to say what everyone else was thinking — he actually tried to correct Jesus (more than once)! But could it be that Jesus was seemingly tougher on Peter because of his potential?

Aside from his typical gaffes, Peter’s biggest blunder was denying that he knew Jesus three times in rapid succession after His arrest. Think of how low Peter must have felt as Jesus lay lifeless in a tomb. Yet, after Jesus burst forth from the grave, He went and found Peter, cooked him breakfast, and reinstated him as a person of great value to the Kingdom of God. Looking back, Peter surely shook his head and thought, “What was I thinking?” However, Peter’s missteps led him to his next steps of becoming one of the most influential Christian leaders of all time.

Like Peter, God sees your potential. He wants to work through your missteps to strengthen your resolve and heighten your awareness. God’s grace is new every morning. Today, let go of regret over past mistakes and take the next step in becoming the influencer you were created to be!

### PRAY

Dear Lord, Thank You for loving me despite my flaws and seeing the potential in me that I didn’t know I had. Use me, God. Allow the lessons I’ve learned from past mistakes to become my words of encouragement and hope for others. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## November 1 – Pour Your Heart Out

### READ

John 18:1-24

Mark 14:32-52

Matthew 26:36-56

Luke 22:39-53

Matthew 26:39, *“Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.’”*

### THINK

Vulnerability tends to get a bad rap. In many situations, it’s seen as weakness. However, when God is involved, what we perceive as being weak is precisely what gives us strength. You see, pouring our hearts out to God from a posture of vulnerability ushers in intimacy as we draw closer to Him. He is our strength.

In Matthew 26:39, Jesus expressed utter vulnerability. He prayed, knowing full well that He was about to endure torture, humiliation, death on the cross, and total separation from the Father. Although we’ll never experience what Jesus experienced, we *can* follow His example by pouring our hearts out to God in prayer.

We don’t have to be afraid to share our secrets. Nothing we say surprises Him. As we pray, He ushers in healing, comfort, and guidance that only He can give. And here's what's great: God’s peace and strength is just a prayer away! Be vulnerable, pour your heart out, and listen for His voice — He has great things to say and great strength to give.

### PRAY

Dear Lord, I know that I’m only as sick as my secrets. Today, I open my heart to You and lay bare my innermost thoughts. I know it’s there that I’ll find the healing, comfort, and direction that I seek. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

## **October 31 – Unite!**

### **READ**

John 15:18-17:26

John 17:20-21, 23 *“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me... I in them and You in me — so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.”*

### **THINK**

Just before her morning jog, a woman notices that clouds are forming and that it might rain, so she asks her husband to pick her up if it starts raining hard. He knows the route she runs and readily agrees. Twenty minutes later, it begins to pour. Quickly, he grabs the keys and sets out to find her. As he goes through a stoplight, she goes under a pedestrian tunnel at the intersection, and they miss each other. She arrives home, soaked and unable to get in because her husband locked the door. He drives the route several times, frustrated that his wife is nowhere in sight. Neither did anything wrong, but they're both miffed. How they communicate and handle the misunderstanding will either lead them back to a place of unity or perhaps to a day of arguments and escalated issues.

Clearly, unity in a marriage is essential, but in today's passage, Jesus is talking on a much bigger scale — the complete unity of believers! How can this be possible when even two people can so easily struggle to maintain it? While we have no control over others' thoughts, words, or actions, we can work towards “oneness” with fellow believers. This is what Jesus was praying over — all future Christ-follower's unity among themselves and with God so that the world will take notice and believe in Him.

Through the power of God's Spirit working in You, resist going toe to toe in quarrels against your brothers and sisters in Christ. Instead, stand firm and fight beside them, pressing towards the goal of seeing the eyes of unbelievers opened in faith.

### **PRAY**

Lord, Thank You for Your love and my salvation through Christ. Let me remain rooted in You. And through Your power working in me, help me live in unity with my fellow believers. Let others see Your love and turn to You in faith as You work within me and guide my relationships. Amen.

## October 30 – It's Not Rocket Science

### READ

John 13:31-15:17

Mark 14:27-31

Matthew 26:31-35

Luke 22:31-38

John 14:23, “Jesus replied, *‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.’*”

### THINK

There's a reason people say, "It's not brain surgery" or "This isn't rocket science" when referring to what should be easily understood. The average neurosurgeon undergoes fifteen years of schooling. Astronauts in training for space missions receive advanced degrees and work in their field for approximately ten years before they enter the specialized course of intense physical and mental endurance requirements. Can you imagine spending so many years preparing for these professions, and then right before your first day on the job, you decide to throw away everything you've learned and just wing it? Sounds absurd, right? That's because information without application is useless!

Thank goodness Jesus doesn't require fifteen years of biblical training before we can become Christ-followers! Our only requirement is to believe He died for our sins and rose again and surrender our lives to Him. However, to live a life of success and purpose, obedience to God's commands is key. That requires living life from a biblical perspective and making choices that are grounded in absolute truth. It means that we call sin "sin." Period. We don't follow our feelings — we walk by faith on the path paved with truth. In other words, we apply the information we've learned!

So, as we strive to obey God's commands, we glorify Him and set an example for others to see what living for Christ is all about. When our words and actions reflect Jesus' presence in our lives, we will be richly blessed for it. Again, it's not rocket science!

### PRAY

Dear Lord, I love You and want to obey Your commands. Help me to be mindful of my everyday actions so that You may be glorified in all that I do. In Jesus' name, Amen.

## **October 29 – When Betrayal Comes a Knockin’**

### **READ**

Mark 14:1-2, 10-26

Matthew 26:1-5, 14-30

Luke 22:1-30 John 13:1-30

Matthew 26:20-21, *“When it was evening, Jesus sat down at the table with the Twelve. While they were eating, He said, ‘I tell you the truth, one of you will betray Me.’”*

### **THINK**

The sting of betrayal — that painful, gut-wrenching, heart-thumping, leaves-you-reeling feeling — we’ve all experienced it somewhere along life’s journey. This uniquely horrific hurt leads us to question ourselves. We wonder: “What’s wrong with me that could cause such blatant rejection?”

Jesus knows the pain of betrayal. For nearly three years, He and His hand-selected crew of twelve men traveled together, shared countless meals, laughed, and experienced the miraculous. Despite His love, compassion, teaching, and perfection, Judas, one of Jesus’ disciples, sold out the Savior for a mere 30 pieces of silver. Wrongly accused, arrested, and eventually crucified, the rest of His closest friends bailed on Him as well, during His darkest hours. Yet, He never abandoned them — after His resurrection, He appeared to them and extended forgiveness.

When betrayal comes knocking, know that Jesus is present. He hurts for you; He feels your pain. As you seek comfort in Him, He’ll guide you through the healing process to strengthen you and make you better, not bitter. And while you can’t change what happened, you can know that He’ll never reject you! He accepts you as His own.

When it comes to betrayal, the old cliché, “It’s not you; it’s me,” truly applies. The problem lies with your “Judas,” not you! Forgive them and move on!

### **PRAY**

Lord Jesus, Thank You for not leaving me to deal with the reeling hurt, confusion, and rejection of betrayal on my own. Please help me extend forgiveness to those who’ve wronged me so that I may begin to heal. Amen.