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## **Priority: Generosity**

April 5, 2020

### **Daily Devotions**

#### **SOAP Introduction**

As an individual or as a family, use this SOAP study to connect with Jesus each day this week. SOAP stands for Scripture, Observation, Application, and Prayer. When we do a SOAP study, we want to root ourselves in the Scriptures, observing what they have for us, applying them to our lives, and then communing with God in prayer both before and after our time in the Bible.

Each day there will be multiple Scriptures for you to ask questions about, sit with, hear from God, and be invited to respond in action to.

If you're doing this individually, be sure to prayerfully consider each day's truth, each day's passages, and each of the questions. If you are doing this as a family, don't be afraid to have each person in your family read one of the verses or to "popcorn read" if it's a longer passage (meaning, don't be afraid to have one person read a verse or two and then another read a couple verses and then another a couple verses).

Parents, if you are going through this with your children, be sure to ask questions that will help your children engage with the daily Scriptures by asking good, concrete questions.

## Day One // Joseph and Mary

Imagine for a moment that you're Jesus' parents. You've been approached by an angel and have been asked to raise and take care of Jesus. You, more than anyone else perhaps, get a front row seat to seeing God in the flesh. What a gift that would be!

At the same time, this gift would cost you a lot. For Mary and Joseph, Jesus' coming would cost them a lot more than any normal, run-of-the-mill birth in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It would disrupt their safety, their future plans, their relationships, their finances, and their livelihoods.

Despite the hardship that would come, Mary and Joseph were able to maintain a spirit of generosity because they knew God loved them and that he had invited them into something greater than themselves – his plan to save and renew the world through Jesus.

Scripture: **Luke 1:26-38; Matthew 2:13-22**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- What words or phrases resonate inside of you as you read and re-read these passages?
- Re-read through those passages again, but this time imagine if you were in Mary and Joseph's shoes. What feelings would bubble to the surface if you were them during each point in the story?
- In what ways do you see Mary and Joseph exemplify a spirit of generosity?
- If you were Mary and Joseph, what do you think would keep you from maintaining a generous spirit in the midst of taking care of Jesus?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- In what ways has the coronavirus disrupted your future plans, relationships, money, and time?
- How has this affected in any way your willingness to be generous? Why?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater generosity as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer:

- *God, grant me the ability to be generous. Allow me to discern where you're calling me towards generosity and give me the courage to maintain that generosity despite the disruption I feel in my life right now. Father, in the midst of the coronavirus, where are you working? How can I join you? Where can I be generous? Amen.*
- Set a reminder on your phone or mark it on a calendar to join us at 3:17pm everyday. Today, let's pray for those affected by the Global Pandemic

**Bonus!** To practice generosity, consider having a "Rice & Beans Night." By choosing a less expensive meal, members of your family/community can experience solidarity with those who have less. You can experience generosity in the midst of disruption by foregoing your normal meal and purchasing and donating food items for The Creek's food co-op program! For more information on our co-op program, visit

<https://www.thecreek.org/outreach>.

## Day Two // Mary, Susanna, Joanna, and Many Others Support Jesus

Yesterday, you got to imagine what it would be like to be Jesus' parents when he was born. Now, imagine if you were one of his followers during his ministry. Oh, the stories you'd have to share with your grandchildren one day!

You'd be able to tell them all about Jesus' teachings – love your enemy, forgive those who wrong you, do not judge. You'd be able to tell them all about Jesus' miracles – walking on water, healing the sick, making the blind see! Incredible!

*“But grandpa,” one perceptive granddaughter asks, “How was Jesus able to go travel so much and do everything he did? How did he pay for his food? Where did he stay? Who paid his bills?”*

Scripture: **Luke 8:1-3**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- What words or phrases resonate inside of you as you read and re-read these passages?
- In Luke 8:1-3, Mary helped to provide for Jesus because he had helped her greatly. In what ways does generosity flow from God's work in your life? Where have you seen God working in your life recently?
- In this passage, Joanna subversively aided Jesus in his ministry because she was also working for Herod. In what ways could your generosity be linked to threatening or weakening the work of evil in our world today?
- In these verses, where do you see the connection between generosity and the ministry of Jesus? Do you view generosity that way today?
- What keeps you from viewing generosity in terms of participating in Jesus' ongoing ministry?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- Where is Jesus working in the lives of others around you right now? How can you join him in this work through the giving of your time, food, or resources?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater generosity as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer:

- *Lord God, open my eyes to see where you are at work, and where you are bringing about your Kingdom so that I may step out in boldness to contribute. Let me not have a spirit of greed or scarcity or passivity, but one of generosity, abundance, and action. Amen.*
- Set a reminder on your phone or mark it on a calendar to join us at 3:17pm everyday. Today, let's pray for the families, including those with special needs.

**Bonus!** To continue practicing generosity, consider making a financial donation to directly support and provide food for our friends in the slums of Kenya. To find out more information, visit <https://give.cmfi.org/p-15607-mohi-disaster-relief.aspx>.

## Day Three // A Woman with Jesus

Jesus came to save the world. His ministry from town to town and village to village testified to that. But at a certain point in Jesus' life, he made his way distinctly to Jerusalem to lay down his life for the sins of humanity.

Before his death, in a town just outside of Jerusalem called Bethany, Jesus was approached by a woman. She had with her a flask containing very expensive perfume that cost over a year's worth of wages and had likely been a family heirloom.

This woman could have kept it in the family, she could have used it as insurance to protect herself against later hardship, or she could have sold it and used the proceeds to raise her own standard of living.

Despite all of these, however, this woman used it to anoint Jesus. For her, no price was too high, and no cost was too great for her to be devoted to Jesus. She had experienced his love. She trusted him. She knew that despite what people may think or say, Jesus had her best interest in mind.

Scripture: **Mark 14:3-9**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- Read and re-read this passage slowly. What part of this woman's actions toward Jesus resonate with you the most? Why?
- Imagine yourself in this scene. How would you feel if you were the owner of the house? How would you feel if you were one of the indignant onlookers? How would you feel if you were this woman?
- When was a time you gave up something of great cost to you? Why did you do it? When was a time you gave up something of great cost to you **out of devotion to Jesus?**
- Do you feel as if there is a price that is too high for you to be devoted to Jesus? What would that price be?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- What is something you feel like God may be inviting you to give to him?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater generosity as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer:

- *Father, I confess that there are times when I don't trust you. I'm afraid and I'm scared of what may happen if I don't hold tightly to what I have. I want to trust. Let me remember your faithfulness and your goodness to me. You've never let me down. Teach me to live in the reality of your abundant kingdom – knowing that to give is to gain, to sacrifice is to save, and to die is to live. Amen.*
- Set a reminder on your phone or mark it on a calendar to join us at 3:17pm every day. Today, let's pray for the elderly and high-risk communities.

## Day Four // Jesus with his Disciples

The time was drawing near. Jesus' death was going to happen the very next morning. But you hadn't quite picked up on that (even though Jesus had been talking about it with you and the other disciples). Besides, it's Passover time – the time when you and the rest of God's people remembered and celebrated God's saving work in the past through the sacrifice of a lamb.

During your Passover dinner with Jesus and his other disciples, Jesus did something totally out of character for someone in his position as a Rabbi (but not out of character with who HE was). He picked up a towel and a bowl and started washing each person's dirty, calloused, and blistered feet.

Even hours before his torture, Jesus found a way to exemplify to his followers what having a spirit of generosity looked like. His generosity totally changed how his disciples thought about serving others. To truly live is to serve. To truly follow Jesus is to follow his example.

Scripture: **Read John 13:1-17**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- Read and re-read this passage slowly. Who do you resonate with most in this passage? Jesus? Peter? The onlooking disciples? Why?
- Imagine Jesus approaching you, removing your shoes, and washing your feet. What do you feel? What do you imagine Jesus thinking as he does this for you?
- How would you feel if Jesus asked you to wash the feet of someone in your family? Of someone in your community? Of a stranger?
- What hesitations or reasons persist within you about washing the feet of another?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- What is one daily way that you can “wash someone's feet” in the midst of coronavirus? What is one weekly way you can “wash someone's feet”?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater generosity as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer:

- *Father in Heaven, you are the eternally Generous One. Make me like you. Change the desires of my heart to serve like your Son. Jesus, my Lord and my Teacher, wash and cleanse me by your Spirit. When I am able, help me put aside my own hesitations and desires to wash the feet of those around me. Amen.*
- Set a reminder on your phone or mark it on a calendar to join us at 3:17pm everyday. Today, let's pray for local, state, and national officials.

**Bonus!** To continue practicing generosity, consider making a list of ways that you could “wash the feet” of your neighbors, of your family, and of those you know at church!

## Day Five // Jesus

After Jesus had washed the feet of his disciples, he was arrested early the next morning. He had spent the whole night praying – to God, for his disciples, for the world. Judas, one of his followers, had snuck off from the group and sold Jesus for a measly 30 pieces of silver. As a result, some soldiers found and carried Jesus off to be questioned.

Jesus' death is the ultimate example of someone who had a spirit of generosity. What did he do to deserve to die? Heal the sick? Give to the poor? Attend to the afflicted? He, as God in the flesh, didn't deserve torture or death, but he laid down his life willingly. *That* is generous.

Today's passage is a little longer, but that's intentional. Sit in this story. Read it slowly. Then, re-read it again. Picture each scene as it unfolds. Use your imagination. Allow yourself to hear the sounds, feel the tension, and see the details that Matthew describes. Imagine that you were really there.

Scripture: **Matthew 27:11-61**

Observation: *What do I see in this passage?*

- Imagine if you were Jesus in these verses. What would it be like to experience what he experienced?
- What are the different ways that Jesus was hurt and humiliated in this passage? Why do you think Jesus endured all of that suffering?
- How does this passage deepen your faith in Jesus?
- If Jesus is God, how does this change your picture of God?
- In **Matthew 27:25**, the people say, "His blood be on us and our children!" In what ways has your own sin been a part of what put Jesus on the cross?
- What does it say about God's character that he would go through this for you? How does that make you feel?

Application: *What do I do with what I've read?*

- In the eyes of Jesus' followers, Jesus' crucifixion wasn't just something that happened, but it also became the crux of how one ought to live. What would it look like for you to emulate Jesus' actions on the cross for those in your family, your community, your neighbors, etc.?
- How do you feel like God is inviting you into greater generosity as a result of your reflection today?

Prayer:

- *Father, I am sorry for my sin that nailed you to that cross. I don't deserve your sacrifice, yet you gave of yourself freely. That you would enter this world and allow yourself to experience the deepest pangs of hurt – both physical and emotional – is something I can barely grasp. In my life, let the cross of your Son Jesus be the foundation for my life – my actions, my thinking, and my feelings. Amen.*

- Set a reminder on your phone or mark it on a calendar to join us at 3:17pm everyday. Today, let's pray for healthcare workers and first responders.