



NOT ON OUR WATCH

April 1st

- **Temptation: Luke 4:1-15**

- Temptation is something we face everyday. It is not something that will go away. But just like Jesus, God has given us the tools that we need to fight temptation. Through the word of God we are given scripture to combat the temptations we face each day. Faith comes from the truth and the truth comes from the word of God. Jesus being tempted like this also shows us that he knows what we are feeling when we are tempted. Jesus is able to sympathize with us, because he too was tempted. Jesus is not just a king who does not understand his people. He knows us very well, and knows what it is like to struggle. There will be times that you give in to the temptation you are facing. This is when you need to seek forgiveness from God. Giving into temptation does not make you a bad person, it just makes you a sinner, which we all are. And sinners need to ask for forgiveness daily. But aren't you thankful we serve a God who is willing to forgive and loves us in spite of our failures?
- Questions
 - What do you see Jesus doing during his temptation?
 - What is his weapon of choice?
 - How can we fight more like Jesus when we are tempted?
 - What are verses we can memorize together to help us when we are tempted?
 - How does it help you to know that Jesus was also tempted and understands you?

- **First Miracle: John 2:1-12**

- Jesus performed many miracles during his ministry. Turning water into wine was the first of those miracles. Jesus was surrounded by many people, and he seemed hesitant to do this miracle. Was he not yet ready to do his miracles for people to know who he was? This was also a private miracle, because only the servants who filled the jars knew when Jesus had turned the water into wine. Jesus' miracles eventually caused many people to believe in him. His miracles would draw large crowds of followers, many of whom were trying to get Jesus to mess up so they could arrest him. Many of the religious leaders did not like Jesus because he came and spoke against the way they were living their lives. Jesus continued to heal people anyway because he had the power to do so, and it changed their lives.

- Questions
 - Who told Jesus about the wine being all gone?
 - What was Jesus' response?
 - Why do you think Jesus responded in this way?
 - Why would miracles make people want to follow Jesus?
- **Calling the disciples: Matthew 4:18-22**
 - Jesus went out and called disciples to follow him. Oftentimes in this culture, if you were a rabbi people would come to you and ask if they could be your disciple. Jesus did things a little different. Jesus chose men who were common. Most of them were not formally educated. They were ordinary fishermen. They would not have seemed special to the culture of that time, but Jesus was something special in them. Jesus didn't want people who seemed right for the job. He wanted people who were teachable, and who he could equip for the job. Jesus often calls us to things that we feel we are not prepared for, but thankfully like the disciples were equipped, he equips us with everything we need to do what he asks of us. The disciples also left everything they had to follow Jesus. James and John even left their father. What if we had enough faith to leave everything and follow Jesus? How would it change us and our family?
 - Questions
 - Who were the 4 disciples in this story?
 - What were they doing when Jesus found them?
 - What did Jesus say to them?
 - How long did it take them to decide if they should follow Jesus?
 - Why do you think Jesus chose common men to be his disciples?
 - Who did the second two brothers leave behind?
 - What would it look like if we left everything to follow Jesus?

April 5th Palm Sunday

- **The cost of following Jesus: Luke 9:23-27**
 - Jesus was talking to his disciples when he was saying these words. These were the men who had given up everything to follow Jesus. They left everything they had to follow him. Was Jesus reminding them of the cost of following him? (Life of Christ research) Jesus knew that the cost of many of the men standing before him would be death. They would all eventually die for following Jesus. He knew they needed to be reminded of what they signed up for. Following Jesus is not a way to make your life easier. Following Jesus will cost you everything, but the reward for following him is eternity in heaven. The reward far outweighs the cost. Jesus wanted his disciples to be fully committed to him. He knew that they could not try to save their own lives, for in doing so they would actually lose them. Denying ourselves means to think less of yourself and more of others. This is a daily act. The more we follow Jesus the less we will look like the world.
 - Questions
 - What does it mean to take up your cross?

- How can you deny yourself?
 - How can you gain the world and forfeit your soul?
 - What is the cost of following Jesus?
 - Is this a cost you are willing to pay?
- **Jesus Calming the Storm: Mark 4:35-41**
 - Jesus shows the world his power over and over in his ministry. Performing miracles, healing people, and walking on water are all things that show the world that he is fully divine. There is power in this story because the disciples had been with him this whole time. They saw first hand all of his miracles. When the storm came they were fearful. They were fearful even though the one person who could help them was right there in the boat with them. They didn't see Jesus because of their fear. They let their fear become bigger than their faith. The disciples knew that Jesus was the answer to their problem. Jesus was reminding them that all they had to do was ask him for help. The disciples were awestruck by the fact that even the wind and seas obeyed him.
 - Questions
 - Where was Jesus when the storm came?
 - Why do you think he was asleep?
 - What did the disciples say when they woke him up?
 - What did Jesus say to the storm?
 - What did the disciples say to each other after Jesus calmed the storm?
 - How have you let fear cloud your understanding of how big Jesus is?
- **Triumphal Entry: Luke 19:28-40**
 - This is a huge stepping stone in the life of Jesus. This event marks the last week of his life. This journey that he takes is more significant than we realize. The reason Jesus took this journey was to fulfill the old testament prophecy. Also, this journey would eliminate any doubt his followers had about him being the Messiah they were looking for. Zechariah 9:9 says, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Jesus rode into the town humbly. Not how the religious leaders expected. They thought he would come ready for battle against the Romans, but instead he came for sacrificial service. They were looking for a king coming to conquer the Romans, but he was coming to conquer something entirely different. He was coming to sacrifice himself to conquer sin and death. Jesus never came to be served like the other kings on earth. Jesus came to love and serve others by giving up himself. The Triumphal entry is all about Jesus proclaiming to be the messiah.
 - Questions
 - Why were the Pharisees telling Jesus to rebuke the people?
 - What will cry out if we don't cry out?
 - What were the people saying as Jesus entered the city?
 - What is significant about this story from the Old Testament?

April 8th Passion week

- **Jesus Cleanses the temple: Matthew 21:12-17**

- The Temple was a place of worship. It was a place where people came to make their sacrifices. Sacrifice means making an offering to God that costs us something. The Temple was a place where people would go and make their sacrifices for the forgiveness of their sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, “without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.” Jesus was frustrated that these people had turned the house of worship into a place where they made money. They were selling sacrifices to people, which was not the way sacrifices were intended to be made. They were also charging people a temple tax, which was not required, but a way for them to make money. Jesus was wanting to purify the temple and restore it to what it was intended for. There are times throughout his ministry that Jesus predicts the destruction and judgment of Jerusalem and the temple. Jesus was in this moment showing that eventually the temple would no longer be needed because the forgiveness of sin would no longer come through making sacrifices in the temple but through the sacrifice on the cross.
- Questions
 - Why was Jesus upset at the people in the temple?
 - What was the temple meant for?
 - Have you ever sacrificed something for God?
 - What did Jesus do to people in the temple once he got the other people out?
 - Are you thankful that we no longer have to go to the temple to make sacrifices?
 - What Old Testament passage does verse 16 come from?

- **Last supper: Luke 22:7-23**

- People came from all over to celebrate passover. This was the yearly celebration the Jews had as they remembered how God brought them out of Egypt. They were celebrating the night the Angel of Death passed over their homes and saved them from Pharaoh. This was a great week-long celebration. The day had come where Jesus and the disciples were going to share the passover meal together. They found a house where they could have a meal, but this time Jesus would have an entirely different reason for taking the Passover meal. This time Jesus is talking about the bread and the cup that were traditionally used in the Passover meal to mean something totally different. The bread would be his body, and the cup would be a new covenant in his blood. Jesus was taking these elements and showing the disciples how they represented the ultimate sacrifice he was about to make. Jesus is saying that this time He would be the passover lamb that saved his people from the enemy. This is a new age of salvation (Strauss, 504) Jesus is explaining to the disciples. “Jesus viewed his death as a

sacrifice of atonement, leading his people in a new exodus from bondage to sin and death (Strauss, 505).”

- Questions
 - Who did Jesus send to prepare the Passover lamb?
 - What was the man carrying who met the disciples in the city?
 - What was Passover intended to celebrate?
 - What were the elements used in the passover meal?
 - How did Jesus change what those represented to reflect his sacrifice?
 - How is Jesus now the new Passover Lamb?
- **Praying in the garden, arrest, before the council: Matthew 26:36-68**
 - Jesus was met with such anguish about what he was about to face. The burden that he carried was great. He knew he needed to seek the Father. He asked if some of his disciples would pray with him. However, they kept falling asleep. Jesus asked the Father if there was any other way for this cup to be taken from him, but ultimately he wanted what the Father wanted. Jesus was willing to die for the people he loved. Jesus would then be betrayed by one of his own disciples. Can you imagine the feeling Jesus must have felt? The disciples tried to stop those who had come to arrest him, but Jesus knew this had to happen. So in secret they took Jesus away to be tried in a court that was meant for him to lose. The leaders were seeking for someone to come and make a false claim about Jesus. They didn't want the truth. They wanted Jesus gone. Jesus was very specific about who he was in verse 64, but the leaders claimed he was speaking blasphemy, which is a fancy word for not being reverent to God. They claimed that he deserved death. Jesus lived a life full of telling the truth. He came to love people and to change their lives. There were people who did not like the things Jesus said. Which is why they wanted to kill him. But all of this was part of God's plan to save the world from their sins. Jesus chose to go to the cross. He could have called down legions of angels, but he knew that this was the way. The cross was there to make all things right again.
 - Questions
 - Who prayed with Jesus in the garden?
 - What did Jesus pray while he was in the garden?
 - When he came back to check on the disciples, what were they doing?
 - Who betrayed Jesus?
 - What happened to the servant of the high priest?
 - Did the people use true or false witnesses against Jesus?
 - What were they saying was Jesus' crime?

April 10th Good Friday

- **Peter's betrayal: Luke 22:31-34 and Luke 22:54-62**
 - We can not imagine the way that the disciples were feeling on the night that Jesus was arrested. Their leader, teacher, and friend they had been with for the past 3 years was arrested for crimes that he did not commit. They felt hopeless.

How could they help him? They must have feared for their own lives. They must have thought that if people associated them with Jesus they too would be arrested and even killed. It is easy for us to give Peter a hard time about how he could ever deny Jesus, but how would we have reacted if we were faced with the same situation. However, one of the things that sticks out in Luke's gospel is that after Peter denied Jesus, the Lord LOOKED at him. Not only was Peter reminded of what Jesus had told him when the rooster crowed, but the Lord looking at him made him come face to face with his betrayal of his dear friend. Peter never thought that he would deny Jesus. In fact, he said just verses before this story that he would go to prison or to death for Jesus. Even disciples make mistakes. Even disciples set out with great expectations of themselves and fail. The amazing thing about Peter's story is that Jesus knew this was going to happen and he loved Peter anyway. Jesus still loves you even when you make mistakes.

- Questions
 - How do you think Peter felt when he was told by Jesus that he would betray him?
 - How do you think Peter felt when Jesus looked at him?
 - Peter said he was willing to die for Jesus and yet he denied him. How does that make you feel?
 - Why do you think Peter would deny that he knew Jesus?
- **Jesus before Pilate, Crowd choosing Barabbas: Matthew 27:11-31**
 - All of the trials of Jesus seemed to have been staged. The religious leaders, chief priests, and elders had stacked everything against him. They wanted Jesus out of the picture because he had said things they didn't like and people were listening to him. Pilate doesn't seem to believe that Jesus is guilty of anything, but he was not willing to fight against the crowd. So he gave the crowd an option of who they could release, Jesus or the criminal Barabbas. However, the religious leaders had already told the people to ask for Barabbas to be released. So there Jesus is again, stuck in a trial that he was destined to lose from the beginning. However, does it surprise you that it would happen this way? Jesus knew he was going to the cross, and he was not surprised by any of this. Jesus knew this was the way for all mankind to be made right with God again. Jesus walked this road willingly, thinking about us the whole time. Thinking about those who he would redeem. Thinking about how all things would be made right again. Jesus knew the cross was the only way.
 - Questions
 - Why do you think Jesus was silent before Pilate?
 - Why do you think the crowd chose Barabbas?
 - Do you think Pilate thought Jesus should have been crucified?
 - What advice did Pilate's wife give to him about Jesus?
 - In verses 27-31 how did they treat Jesus?
 - How does it make you feel to think about Jesus choosing the cross and willingly giving his life to save yours?

- **The Crucifixion: Matthew 27:32-66**

- Imagine this man who had been walking the earth for the past 3 years teaching, healing, loving, and changing lives. Imagine him hanging on a cross. Breathing his very last breaths. He was beaten in such a way that many people did not recognize him. People are yelling at him, "Save yourself, come down from the cross!" All of which he could have done in an instant, but he knew the cross was the only way. He knew he had to die to make things right again. He hung there for hours and hours, suffering for you and me. Finally, he would take his last breath and yield his spirit to the Father. In that moment alone, everything changed. The curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook and rocks split. The curtain was the separation between us and God. The curtain was meant to separate us from the presence of God. Only the high priests went behind the curtain once a year to offer a sacrifice for the Israelites. But because Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice, everyone now has access to the presence of God. There is no separation anymore. Other sacrifices were not enough, but Jesus was. Jesus dying for us bridged the gap between us and God that happened so long ago in the Garden of Eden. The wait was over. The new, perfect, spotless Lamb sacrificed once and for all. The cross was meant to silence Jesus. It was meant to stop his mission to save the world. Little did they know that the cross only completed his mission. The cross was meant to be a mockery, but became a victory instead.
- Questions
 - What are your thoughts about Jesus dying on the cross?
 - How does it make you feel?
 - Verses 51 through 53 talk about what happened after Jesus died, what is significant about these things?
 - Who did the tomb belong to?
 - Why was there a guard set in front of the tomb?

April 12th Resurrection Sunday

- **Resurrection and ascension: Luke 24**

- After the death of Jesus the disciples must have felt as though their life was over. They had lost their teacher and best friend. What would they do now? How would they continue without him? For two days they probably sat around looking at each other hoping that they would eventually wake up from this nightmare they were having. When the women went to the tomb that morning the last thing they expected to see was the stone rolled away. Then when they went to look inside the tomb, the body was not in there. All these questions must have been running through their heads. Then an angel appeared and stated the most victorious words in all of Scripture, "He is not here, but has risen." Jesus was alive! All the things he had been teaching them had come true. Jesus had conquered death! Verse 46-48 says, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be

proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” Jesus knew these things had to happen to fulfill all of God’s plans. Jesus was telling the disciples they were witnesses to all of his ministry. He needed them to carry on the ministry and tell everyone what they had seen and heard. When Jesus ascends into heaven they are left feeling overjoyed and excited to tell everyone they meet.

- Questions
 - How must the disciples have felt after the death of Jesus?
 - Do you think they remembered all the times he talked about rising again on the 3rd day?
 - Can you imagine how the women felt when they walked up and saw the stone rolled away?
 - Are you excited to share the story of Jesus with others? What keeps you from sharing that story?
 - Why is it important that Jesus conquered death?
 - How could you tell this week about the life changing story of Jesus?
- **Jesus appearing to many others: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11**
 - Paul is writing here to explain the importance of Jesus appearing to so many people after the resurrection. He also wanted people to know that everything in the life of Jesus happened in accordance with the scriptures. Many people saw the resurrected Christ, therefore, any claims that he did not raise from the dead are false. Jesus died and rose again just as he said he would, and people witnessed it. Jesus’ death and resurrection was God’s plan from the beginning. God knew that we would need a savior, therefore, he sent Jesus as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins. Christ died according to the scriptures just like God planned. He rose again to prove death no longer has the final word. We are free in Jesus, and that is the Good News of the Gospel.
 - Questions
 - Why is it important that we know Jesus appeared to many others after he rose from the grave?
 - Why does Paul say he is the least of the apostles?
 - Have you come to a place where you have asked Jesus into your heart?
 - Parents share your testimony with your children.
 - Tell how you are thankful for Jesus dying on the cross for you.