



Lent 2017

Encounters with Christ

In recent years I've become more passionate about people encountering Jesus in a real and honest way and for people to see Him for who He really is.

This devotional looks at the very different ways Jesus interacted with various characters in the Bible. Jesus' interactions with each of these people or groups give us a great insight into who He was while on earth, how He showed His love to those around Him and how He took an individual interest into each life He encountered.

The devotions run for the 40 days of Lent, which excludes Sundays as rest days. Each week looks at a different type of interaction people had with Christ. Each day consists of a Bible reading, a short thought, a short prayer and a quote that may help to bring home the message (or at least give us some food for thought).

My hope for these devotions is that the readings and thoughts will give us some insight into our own encounters with Christ, whether it is to ask Him stuff, to worship Him, to hang out with Him, to be set straight by Him, or to listen to Him, so that we may get to know Him better and love Him more. Even more than this, I pray that these devotions will make you hunger after more encounters with Jesus, will make you search after the truth of who He is and give you the courage to 'approach the throne of grace with confidence.' (Hebrews 4:16)

Nico

1 - 4 March: Great expectations

Right from the start (of time) it was quite obvious that Jesus was going to be someone special.

Day 1 - Wednesday, 1 March 2017 (Ash Wednesday): Elizabeth

Read: Luke 1:39-45

Think: Luke tells us a fascinating tale of Mary visiting a (highly unlikely) pregnant relative named Elizabeth. In time we will see that the boy Elizabeth is carrying at the time of this encounter would be John the Baptist, who was called to make a way for the Lord. However, we see that Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit when she feels her baby jump in her womb at Mary's (and therefore Jesus') arrival. Even before His birth, Jesus influences God-fearing people!

Elizabeth was so sensitive to the Holy Spirit that she knew who it was approaching. She starts prophesying and, I suppose, encourages Mary and confirms what the angel just told her in the preceding verses.

This kind of sensitivity comes from 'being righteous in the sight of the Lord,' (Luke 1:6) and listening to Him when He speaks. Jesus later said that He is the Good Shepherd and that His sheep will know His voice (John 10:14-16). Do you know the voice of the Good Shepherd? Do you listen to what He says? Are you sensitive to the workings of the Holy Spirit?

Pray: Jesus, make me sensitive to your Holy Spirit. Open my eyes to recognise your hand in my circumstances and to see your image in the people around me. Amen.

Remember: *"Will God ever ask you to do something you are not able to do? The answer is yes--all the time! It must be that way, for God's glory and kingdom. If we function according to our ability alone, we get the glory; if we function according to the power of the Spirit within us, God gets the glory. He wants to reveal Himself to a watching world."*
~Henry T. Blackaby~

Day 2 - Thursday, 2 March 2017: Simeon

Read: Luke 2:25-35

Think: What an amazing thing to be promised by God: You will not die until you have seen the Messiah. For the Jews of the time that would have been an exceptionally powerful promise that would have filled anyone with hope for the near future.

Simeon was, like Elizabeth and her husband, 'righteous and devout,' (Luke 2:25). He too was sensitive to the Holy Spirit and was led to a place where he could meet the Messiah, Jesus. How easily he could have missed it by ignoring the Holy Spirit's prompt to go into the temple...

Before that precious moment, though, he probably had a job to do and a family to support. By being faithful to the very things he had at hand to do, God fulfilled the promise He made to Simeon. What are the things God promised you? When was the last time you felt the Holy Spirit nudge you to do/say something or go somewhere? What are the things you need to be faithful in right now?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the gift of your Holy Spirit. Help me to know your guidance in everything I do. Help me to be faithful in all I do as I trust you to fulfill the promises you've made. Amen.

Remember: *"God never made a promise that was too good to be true."*
~D.L. Moody~

Day 3 - Friday, 3 March 2017: Anna

Read: Luke 2:36-38

Think: Anna was a very old woman who was awaiting, praying for and fasting for the redemption of Israel. She, like Simeon, was devout. I can only imagine the impact 84 years of daily prayer would have on a person. Anna is also the first missionary we know of. She 'spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem,' (Luke 2:38). That is what happens when we meet the great Hope, the great Restorer. I recall asking Anke to marry me. When she said yes, we immediately told our parents and family. The next morning was the first day of the new school year (I was a teacher at the time) and somehow my colleagues knew about our engagement before I told them. Even if they hadn't, I was so excited and happy that I wanted to tell everyone! When we meet Jesus and He gives us hope, joy, peace and shows us His love and power, we'll have two responses. We'll worship Him and tell everyone about the 'hope that lives within' us (1 Peter 3:15).

Pray: Jesus, thank you that meeting you is a wonderful thing. Thank you that you did not shy away from me when I met you the first time. Help me get to know you more and love you better. Renew in me the joy of my salvation. Amen.

Remember: *"God Hold us to that which drew us first, when the Cross was the attraction, and we wanted nothing else."*
~Amy Carmichael~

Day 4 - Saturday, 4 March 2017: John the Baptist

Read: Matthew 3:11-15

Think: A friend of mine won the South African Pop Idols competition in 2010. When he returned home after his victory he was asked to do a show at one of our local theatres. I was trying to buy a ticket for the sold out show when I received a phone call from him asking if I would like to open the event for him, i.e. to be the pre-show show. I was greatly honoured by this and accepted it, of course!

However honoured I felt, it still pales in comparison to the massive honour we all have to be participants in God's plan for salvation and change in this world. Like John I want to ask Jesus, "Me? Are you sure?" The answer is and always will be a resounding yes. Then, like Isaiah, I want to reply: "Here am I. Send me." Have you heard God's call? Has He made any difference in your life? Would you like to be part of His plan?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you not only involve me in your plan for salvation, but that you trust me with it. Help me be a faithful servant to you and those around me, to the glory of your name and for the expansion of your kingdom. Amen.

Remember: *"The will of God is not something you add to your life. It's a course you choose. You either line yourself up with the Son of God...or you capitulate to the principle which governs the rest of the world."*
~Elisabeth Elliot~

5 - 11 March: Meeting the King

When people met Jesus, when they came face to face with Him, they responded in their own unique way.

Day 5 - Monday, 6 March 2017: Mary (Jesus' Mother)

Read: Luke 1:41-56 and 2:19

Think: After the angel visited Mary to tell her of what was to come she went to visit Elisabeth, who was pregnant. When Elisabeth, filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:41), prophesies over Mary, it must have been a confirmation/affirmation of what the angel had told her. Mary, waiting for the coming of the Messiah like all other Jews at the time, breaks out in a song of praise and worship extolling the characteristics of God and what He's done in the past when she realises that the Messiah is really on His way soon. Also that she, humble as she was, will play a massive part in the story of salvation.

When reading Mary's song of praise it may sound like she's become a bit arrogant (Luke 1:48). In the same song she criticises the proud (v. 51) as well! Is that hypocritical? I don't think so. She is proud about what God has done, not what she in her own ability couldn't do. We should first of all be careful that we don't play down what God is doing in our lives.

When the shepherds made a big hoo-ha about her Son being born, Luke tells us that she 'treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.' Like a mother would.

How many things can you remember God doing for you? Is it worth surrendering more of your worries to Him? Can you count your blessings?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for all you've done for me in the past. Thank you that you loved me, regardless of background and lack of worth. Help me remember who You are in every situation and circumstance, that I may surrender more of myself to your sovereignty. Amen.

Remember: *"The more you pray, the less you'll panic. The more you worship, the less you worry. You'll feel more patient and less pressured."*
~Rick Warren~

Day 6 - Tuesday, 7 March 2017: Shepherds

Read: Luke 2:8-20

Think: I love the story of the shepherds in Luke 2. There's a clear pattern that emerges here: A message - praise - curiosity - meeting the King - praise. The angel brings the shepherds the message of Christ being born (Luke 2:10-12), some more angels begin to praise God loudly (Luke 2:13-14), the shepherds become curious (Luke 2:15), they meet the King (Luke 2:16) and they glorify God, spreading the word. (Luke 2:20).
I think that's the way the Gospel is spread most effectively throughout the world in our time as well. The only difference is that it's not the angels who bring the message and worship God, but us. We live lives that glorify God alone, people notice and become curious, they meet the "Reason for the Season," fall in love with Him and glorify Him as well. You see, worship sparks worship. It really is contagious. I can't imagine someone meeting Jesus and not be moved towards an act of worship or surrender.
Do you live a life glorifying God? Is your conviction of who God is so strong that it influences your life in an obvious way? When was the last time you truly worshipped God?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that someone made me curious about you and that I had the opportunity to meet you and surrender my life to you. Help me to live a life that glorifies you so that others may notice you and glorify you as well. Amen.

Remember: *"God created us for this: to live our lives in a way that makes him look more like the greatness and the beauty and the infinite worth that he really is. This is what it means to be created in the image of God."*
~John Piper~

Day 7 - Wednesday, 8 March 2017: Joanna and Susanna

Read: Luke 8:1-3

Think: Joanna and Susanna are two of the women who served and supported Jesus during the three years of His ministry on earth. They did this as a response to what He did for them.

Joanna was a well-off wife of one of Herod's stewards. She had the means to support Jesus' ministry and she used it for that purpose.

Susanna was a person healed or freed by Christ who then supported Him during His ministry on earth with all she had. Both Joanna and Susanna were counted as part of Jesus' disciples.

What I love about these women is that their gratefulness towards Jesus was turned into action. They didn't just accept Christ's mercy and went on with their lives, they gave their time, money, resources and everything they had to Jesus.

Has Jesus done something for you in the past? How are you thanking Him? What do you have to give (time, money, hands, abilities)?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for saving me. Please show me what I can give to support your work on earth and give me the courage to part with it willingly and happily for your name's sake. Amen.

Remember: *"Worship has been misunderstood as something that arises from a feeling which "comes upon you," but it is vital that we understand that it is rooted in a conscious act of the will, to serve and obey the Lord Jesus Christ."*

~Graham Kendrick~

Day 8 - Thursday, 9 March 2017: The Magi

Read: Matthew 2:9-12

Think: The Magi in the Christmas story have always fascinated me. Firstly, they follow celestial bodies, because they have a sense of the importance of what's happening. It isn't clear exactly where they are all from, though some early documents (written centuries after Christ's birth) suggest they travelled from India, Babylonia and Persia respectively. Wherever they're from, it is very clear that they travelled great distances just to meet the Christ.

Secondly, they brought gifts (however useless they may have been for a child...) to the young family. They came not only to meet Jesus, but to honour Him with their gifts.

Thirdly, they did all of this, went through all of the hassle, for a King they had not even met yet. This wasn't a 'spur of the moment' decision. They were convinced that facing many dangers and great distances was worth meeting the King and honouring Him.

Are you as convinced as the Magi were that meeting the King is worth a bit of effort? Do you have gifts to bring before the Lord? Do you honour the King with your gifts?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that your love for us does not depend on the way we worship you. Help me bring my gifts to you as an offering worthy of your name. Amen.

Remember: *"No man gives anything acceptable to God until he has first given himself in love and sacrifice."*
~A.W. Tozer~

Day 9 - Friday, 10 March 2017: The afflicted daughter of Abraham

Read: Luke 13:10-13

Think: This story of a nameless character in Luke's Gospel holds great meaning for us today.

Firstly she is described by Jesus as a 'daughter of Abraham,' (Luke 13:16). This means she was probably one of the Jewish faithful and spiritual elite who attended meetings at the synagogue regularly (along the same lines as Simeon and Anna), in spite of her affliction. Walking must have been difficult, yet she attended synagogue regularly. She shows great determination and resolve to visit the house of prayer despite her challenges. Do we show similar dedication in the face of challenges? Secondly her story shows us that, even though she was fully devoted to God, her life wasn't easy. We can so easily fall into the trap of thinking that our lives should become easier because we follow Jesus. This couldn't be further from the truth. See what John 16:33 says... Challenges and difficulties can be the very things that draw us closer into God's mercy and secure in our minds a greater dependence on Christ. Do you draw closer to God in the face of difficulty or shy away from Him? Thirdly, this woman starts praising God after being touched by His love and mercy. Do we burst out in praise of the Father when we see and feel Him move?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that facing hardship does not mean you are angry with me. Help me hold on to your promises in spite of circumstances and give me the words and ways to praise you when I experience your goodness. Amen.

Remember: *"That is what worship is all about. It is the glad shout of praise that arises to God the creator and God the rescuer from the creation that recognizes its maker, the creation that acknowledges the triumph of Jesus the Lamb. That is the worship that is going on in heaven, in God's dimension, all the time. The question we ought to be asking is how best we might join in."*
~N.T. Wright~

Day 10 - Saturday, 11 March 2017: Blind Bartimaeus (near Jericho)

Read: Luke 18:35-43

Think: I like the way Luke shares this story just after the parable Jesus told about the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) 'to show them that they should always pray and not give up.' (Luke 18:1). This beggar, Bartimaeus, does just exactly what Jesus told the people to do: he was persistently calling on the Lord. And Jesus hears Him and heals Him.

The Psalms are full of examples of people who called on the Lord persistently. Their cries are always heard and the response is always praise, as with this blind beggar near Jericho.

Jesus asks him what He can do for him. I'm sure Bartimaeus didn't ask Jesus for an opportunity to praise Him more. He had a very real, sincere request. His response to Jesus healing him is, I believe, just as sincere: praise! Maybe it's time we try to be less religious in our praise and bring before God our real, sincere requests instead of 'earning' His grace.

Do you have something so important to you that you would pray for it continually for as long as it takes? Has God answered a prayer you've been praying for a long time? How do you respond?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you hear our prayers. Thank you that our prayers are never in vain. Help me be persistent in my prayers and give me the faith I need to carry on praying them until you answer. Ignite in me the fire of persistent prayer and gratitude. Amen.

Remember: *"You will never cease to be the most amazed person on earth at what God has done for you on the inside."*
~Oswald Chambers~

13 - 18 March: Go!

When people encountered Jesus, they were always sent somewhere or to someone so that others may encounter Him too.

Day 11 - Monday, 13 March 2017: Mary Magdalene

Read: John 20:14-18

Think: I can only imagine the relief, joy and elation Mary Magdalene must have felt when she realised it was Jesus talking to her. She was, after all, one of the women who supported Jesus during His ministry and often travelled with Him and the disciples. She was also one of the women whom Jesus healed (Luke 8:2).

Our first instinct would be to stay with the person of our affection for as long as possible! I call it the "You-hang-up-no-you-hang-up" phenomenon (when you're on the phone with your sweetheart and neither of you want to hang up in case the other one's still on the line).

Jesus, however, gives her different instructions. He tells her to go tell the disciples, thereby making her the first herald of the resurrection!

Our love for Jesus, however strong it may be in person, will never be a private love for long. Love for Jesus is best declared when shared with others. When last did you share the love you had for Jesus with those around you?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you love me and that you rejoice in the broken, often weak love I have for you. Thank you, Lord, that I am safe with you. Help me share your love with those around me so that they too may taste and see your goodness and acceptance. Amen.

Remember: *"Love only grows by sharing. You can only have more for yourself by giving it away to others."*
~Brian Tracy~

Day 12 - Tuesday, 14 March 2017: The demon-possessed man

Read: Mark 5:18-20

Think: What precedes today's passage is the well-known story of Jesus sending the demons from this man into a herd (or litter, depending on who you ask) of pigs that ultimately drown themselves. The Bible says this man was so strong that chains could not hold him. When he is set free from his demonic bondage he begs Jesus to come with Him. Jesus says no and sends him back to his family, friends and his own people to share what Jesus has done for him.

This is exactly what Jesus asks each of us to do as well. We can't really share Christ's peace, mercy, hope, power and love via proxy. We have to encounter it for ourselves before we can share it with others. Then, when we share it, we share it faithfully, truthfully and sincerely with those around us. Nothing more. Nothing less. What has Jesus done for you? What difference has He made in your life? What would you say when someone asks what difference Jesus has made in your life?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for being with me throughout all of my life. Help me share who you are to me and give those around me a true reflection of who you are. Remind me often whenever I forget. Amen.

Remember: *“Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom,” says Paul. And we are most in line with the Spirit, most faithfully obedient, when instead of trying to manipulate people into faith, we simply live in that freedom and let the Spirit do the work of transformation.”*
~Mark Galli~

Day 13 - Wednesday, 15 March 2017: The Samaritan woman at the well

Read: John 4:28-30, 39-42

Think: Please read the whole of John 4 to get a greater understanding of the exchange between Jesus and the Samaritan woman. Some background: She must have been poor, because rich women would never draw water at a well. She must have been an outcast, for this work was normally done early in the morning or early evening. She chooses to go at noon when the least amount of people would have been there.

What makes this woman unique is not only her relation to Jesus (Samaritan vs. Jew), her social or moral standing (or lack thereof), but that she is one of the few people not trying to find Jesus or get something from Him. Jesus puts Himself in a place where their paths will cross, I think, on purpose.

She is also unique in that Jesus reveals Himself as the Messiah to her; something He never even did to His disciples.

This revelation must have given her some courage as she leaves her water jar to go tell the people of the town that the Messiah might be outside.

The people trust her, or are at least curious as to her claims, and because of that they encounter Jesus for themselves and are convinced that He really is the Messiah.

This interaction tells me that Jesus meets each of us in a unique way. Just because I have met Jesus in a specific way does not mean everyone else should encounter Him in the same way. We only have to share what we've experienced with those around us, whether they believe us or not.

Do you believe Jesus is the Messiah? Have you encountered Him in such a way that you're willing to share this with those around you, regardless of your past or present?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for making me unique. Thank you that you do not keep others from meeting with you due to background or world view. Help me be patient and gracious to those who see the world differently from me and help me be a true reflection of your mercy, love and power. Amen.

Remember: *"I think... if it is true that there are as many minds as there are heads, then there are as many kinds of love as there are hearts."*
~Leo Tolstoy~

Day 14 - Thursday, 16 March 2017: The man with leprosy

Read: Mark 1:40-45

Think: I've always found it strange that Jesus would instruct, even warn (Mark 1:43) someone He healed not to tell anyone of what He had done. In this episode, the man with leprosy is told to go and show himself to the priest and make the necessary sacrifices as prescribed by Moses *for him to get back to normal life*. I think herein lies the answer. Jesus wanted the man to be healed, but He did not want an 'evangelist' at that time. It is far better to do as we're told when God speaks than to try and figure it out for ourselves and do as we think.

Paul later writes in 1 Corinthians 12 about the gifts of the Spirit. Not everyone has or gets the same gifts. Some are evangelists, some are administrators. We're not all called in the same way, or for the same purposes. We shouldn't wish to be something we're not. We might get in the way... (Mark 1:45) However, we should do what we're called to do: love those around us in whichever way we can.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for making me a unique part of your body, the church. Help me discover what gifts you have given me and what your good and pleasing will is by using them. Give me the courage to be true to your plans for me and not get in the way of your work. Amen.

Remember: *"Some people have a warped idea of living the Christian life. Seeing talented, successful Christians, they attempt to imitate them. For them, the grass on the other side of the fence is always greener. But when they discover that their own gifts are different or their contributions are more modest (or even invisible), they collapse in discouragement and overlook genuine opportunities that are open to them. They have forgotten that they are here to serve Christ, not themselves."*

~Billy Graham~

Day 15 - Friday, 17 March 2017: The woman in Nain

Read: Luke 7:11-17

Think: It almost seems that Jesus is drawn to sad, broken and needy people... That's why I don't think it's a coincidence that Jesus and His disciples arrive at Nain at exactly this time.

Two things stand out about this encounter: This is the first person Jesus raises from the dead (Jairus' daughter and Lazarus are raised from the dead later), and the widow didn't approach Jesus to ask His help.

This is significant and profound, because it holds so much comfort and hope for us today. Jesus knows what we need and He meets us exactly where we need Him most. In those days a rabbi would not have touched the coffin for fear of becoming unclean. Jesus, however, touches it to show us He is personally involved, closely, there where we are.

Word soon spread about this miracle, because the people were amazed at what they saw. What is the last time you've seen God do wonderful things for others or yourself? Where do you need Jesus to step in most at this moment in time?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for being Emmanuel, God with us. Thank you that you come to meet us where we are. Remind us often of all you've done and help us live lives of gratitude so that others will notice and be drawn to encounter with you and that word of your loving kindness will spread throughout my whole circle of influence. Amen.

Remember: *"Miracles are a retelling in small letters of the very same story which is written across the whole world in letters too large for some of us to see."*

~C.S. Lewis~

Day 16 - Saturday, 18 March 2017: Simon Peter

Read: Matthew 4:18-20

Think: Three things stand out in this episode of Christ calling Peter into ministry. One: Peter was busy doing what he did for a living; his so-called 'day job.' We too, are often called by being busy with what we have to do at the time. Are you unsure of your calling? Do whatever there is to do today. You'll be amazed at how God uses what we do now, as insignificant as it might seem, for the greater good in the future.

Two: Jesus calls Peter into a relationship with Him first. "Come, follow me..." tells us that Peter needs to encounter Christ first before being sent out. No-one can say they are the finished product before Jesus starts using them for His glory and purpose. We're called as we are, firstly to know and love Jesus and then...

Three: Jesus will send Peter out to be a fisher of men. When Jesus calls us into relationship with Him, when He gives us spiritual gifts or physical means, it is always with the gospel in mind, being the message of God's love and grace to the rest of the world. Our gifts, talents, passions, abilities are never ours alone.

What do you have that needs doing today? Would you follow Jesus as willingly as Peter did? What do you have to give to those around you?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you have a plan for me. Thank you that you do not call me to serve you and leave me to my own devices. Help me see the opportunities you give me and help me be a true fisher of men. Amen.

Remember: *"God did not direct His call to Isaiah— Isaiah overheard God saying, ". . . who will go for Us?" The call of God is not just for a select few but for everyone. Whether I hear God's call or not depends on the condition of my ears, and exactly what I hear depends upon my spiritual attitude."*

~Oswald Chambers~

20 - 25 March: The Faith Element

Jesus was sometimes surprised and even impressed by people who showed great faith in Him.

Day 17 - Monday, 20 March 2017: The woman who was healed by a touch

Read: Mark 5:25-34

Think: The central character of this story was legally unclean because of her condition (much like lepers were). Mark says she had been suffering for 12 years, which explains her desperation. Her social status and condition would have made her approach Jesus with the greatest of discretion and, perhaps, a quiet hope in His abilities.

When she touched Christ's robe and was healed, both she and Jesus knew. It would have been easy to disappear into the crowd and enjoy the healing she had received. However, it is by falling at the feet of Jesus and sharing her story fully that Jesus calls her 'daughter,' (Mark 5:34) and commends her for her faith. More than that, a whole crowd bore witness to her miraculous healing and the Messiah imparting her with the identity of child of the Most High.

We can so easily fall victim to despair and hopelessness. I find myself discouraged after minor setbacks. Yet this story of faith inspires me to carry on and fight my way to Jesus' side, in hope of restoration, healing, comfort and provision. Do you believe, as this woman did, that the mere presence of Jesus will resolve the challenges you're facing? Do you want to be called a daughter or son of the Most High?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you give us examples of regular, ordinary people who sought after you and weren't disappointed. Help me grow in faith to come to you more often and with more of my life. Amen.

Remember: *"All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."*

~Ralph Waldo Emerson~

Day 18 - Tuesday, 21 March 2017: Jairus the synagogue leader

Read: Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

Think: Jairus was a synagogue leader and would have known of Jesus, heard Him teach and heard of some of the miracles Jesus had done up to then. There is no doubt that Jairus must have been a desperate man to approach Jesus in such a way and entrust his daughter's health and life to the man He was told to hate. And yet, he did so.

When Jairus receives the bad news of his daughter's death, Jesus comforts him and encourages Him to 'just believe,' (Mark 5:36).

It is interesting to think that Jairus' faith was tested before He was a follower of Christ. Yet, he believed that Jesus was able to save his daughter. We can't earn God's healing or grace, or deserve it more than others who may be less inclined to follow Him. Whatever our system of belief is, we need to trust Jesus with everything; that which is easy to entrust to Him as well as that which is hardest to release into His care and most dear to us.

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you encouraged Jairus to believe. Thank you that we too only need to believe in you, your power and love. Help me entrust my family, my finances and all that is dear to me into your care. Amen.

Remember: *"Faith is not the belief that God will do what you want. It is the belief that God will do what is right."*
~Max Lucado~

Day 19 - Wednesday, 22 March 2017: The Syro-Phoenician woman

Read: Matthew 15:21-28

Think: This woman was from a part of Galilee where Gentiles and Jews lived together, yet very much apart. With a very nationalistic mindset, the Jews would not have thought twice about leaving this woman's plea at the door. Even Jesus' silence and the way He later answers the woman's petitions speak of a hostility between the two nations. Or does it?
I don't think Jesus keeps His mercy and willingness to help from any one group of people, nationality or outlook on life. What does His silence mean then?
I've prayed many prayers that were met with silence. Most of the time it was to test my resolve. In Luke 18:1 Jesus tells a story to encourage His disciples to keep praying and never give up. I believe this is a similar test which this heathen woman passes better than I ever have.
What are the things you're asking God? Do you persevere in your petitions? Do you give up when you don't see the answer immediately? Will you trust Jesus in the silences?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you help me grow in my faith. Thank you that you don't just give me what I want, but what I need. Help me trust that your will for me is better than my will for me. Amen.

Remember: *"I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer. You are yourself the answer. Before your face questions die away. What other answer would suffice?"*
~C.S. Lewis~

Day 20 - Thursday, 23 March 2017: The Centurion in Capernaum

Read: Matthew 8:5-13

Think: This story is another example of someone not of the Jewish faith approaching Jesus for the healing of a loved one. Again, Jesus commends this 'heathen' for his faith. The centurion understands authority and the relationship between different levels in the hierarchy. Matthew says that Jesus was amazed (Matthew 8:10) when he heard the centurion speak. I think Jesus was amazed because the centurion understood not only the dynamics of leadership and authority, but that he recognised Jesus as one with authority over illness and even death; something not even Jesus' followers and the Jewish religious leaders quite understood. This so-called heathen's faith is bigger than any the religious elite had.

I've come to realise that we, as Christians, need to get in touch with people who do not think the same way we do or believe the same things we do for two reasons: to give them a taste of Jesus in the world and also to learn from them. Being a Christian can very easily become a feather in our cap, so to speak, giving us the idea that we are better than those who aren't saved yet. Nothing can be further from the truth. We may even be amazed at what we learn, as Jesus was.

Do you have non-Christian friends? Do you spend time with people of different faiths? Are you willing to learn from others?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you did not give us a monopoly on faith by drawing us into your body. Help me be open to your influence, regardless of where or whom it comes from. Amen.

Remember: *"This is what the past is for! Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see."*
~Corrie Ten Boom~

Day 21 - Friday, 24 March 2017: Martha

Read: John 11:20-27

Think: Martha and Mary were close to Jesus. Their brother, Lazarus, had just died. Martha went out to meet Jesus when she heard He was approaching. Even in her grief she had hope, but not a lot. When Jesus says that Lazarus will rise again, she thinks He means that Lazarus will rise again at the last day. Then Jesus tells her who He is. It is only after she acknowledges that Jesus is the Messiah that she goes to call Mary. Do you acknowledge Jesus as the 'resurrection and the life' (John 11:25-26)? Do you believe Him? Do you trust Him enough to put your faith in Him, however tentatively?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you truly are the resurrection and the life. Help me believe when my faith is small. Remind me often of who you are and who I am in you. Amen.

Remember: *"No man is excluded from calling upon God, the gate of salvation is set open unto all men: neither is there any other thing which keepeth us back from entering in, save only our own unbelief."*
~John Calvin~

Day 22 - Saturday, 25 March 2017: The man with a demon-possessed son

Read: Mark 9:14-29

Think: This man brought his son to be freed from an impure spirit, but Jesus was away with Peter, James and John (the Transfiguration, Mark 9:2-13). While Jesus was away, His disciples tried to free the boy from the spirit, but was unsuccessful. The father then asks Jesus to help him, if He can. This man must have had a measure of faith (and/or desperation... the two often goes hand in hand) to bring his son to be healed. How discouraging it must have been to see Jesus' disciples unable to help. As well as the teachers of the law fighting over why he wasn't healed! However, Jesus says that all is possible for those who believe. The man replies: "I believe! Help me overcome my unbelief!" What a marvellous prayer to pray. I believe. Help me overcome my unbelief. This man somehow understood that even his faith was something that Jesus could help him with. This reminds me that my faith should be in Jesus, not in my own faith or ability. The focus shouldn't be on having *FAITH* in Jesus, but having faith in *JESUS*.

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you have compassion with me, even when my faith is small and weak. Help me to always put my faith in you, not in myself or my ability to believe. Help me overcome my unbelief. Amen.

Remember: *"Our belief in God is not blind faith. Belief is having a firm conviction something is true, not hoping it's true."*
~Max Lucado~

27 March - 1 April: Forgiveness

Jesus was able to forgive people's sin when He was on earth. It had a profound impact on those who were forgiven, as well as those who looked on. He still does it today.

Day 23 - Monday, 27 March 2017: The woman taken in adultery

Read: John 8:1-11

Think: The interaction between Jesus and the people who brought the woman to Jesus has always been the focus of this story. However, there is a more subtle interaction between Jesus and this woman that I have often missed. After the accusers drop their stones and leave the two of them in peace, Jesus looks up to see that they've left. Then he speaks to the woman: "Is no one left to condemn you? Where are they?" The Pharisees leaving did not make this woman any less guilty. Her transgression was a grievous one. The Pharisees leaving speaks more about their own guilt than it does about the woman's innocence.

When forgiveness is freely given, it can become easy to just count on grace and do what we want. When Jesus speaks again, He forgives her sin and instructs her not to sin again. It is interesting to find that Jesus' forgiveness preceded her repentance. When we too are forgiven our many sins, it is only to be better in the future. Repentance does not buy us forgiveness, it makes us do things better in the future. Peter later writes that we shouldn't use the freedom and forgiveness we've received as a cover for doing evil (1 Peter 2:16). Paul echoes that in Romans 6:15.

Do you find it easier to do wrong because of God's forgiveness? Do you justify doing bad things? Do you accept Christ's sacrifice and forgiveness for yourself?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you have forgiven me many times before. Thank you that I can't buy your forgiveness, but that you offer it freely. Help me change that I may live to the glory of your name, by living as a forgiven person. Amen.

Remember: *"You asked me questions nobody ever asked me before. You knew that I was a murderer two times over, but you treated me like a man..."*
~Richard Wright~

Day 24 - Tuesday, 28 March 2017: The criminal crucified with Jesus

Read: Luke 23:39-43

Think: We don't know what the crimes of the criminals crucified with Jesus were. We do know that one of them mocked Jesus, even while he was dying. The other repented and asked Jesus to remember him when His kingdom comes. Many people may think that it is because the criminal defended Jesus that Jesus showed him mercy. I think it is because of Jesus' very nature to forgive and accept that He showed the criminal mercy and made him the first (and only) person whom Jesus confirmed to go to heaven. Despite his past, despite his circumstances, Jesus gave him the ultimate gift: forgiveness and welcome.

Jesus once told a parable about workers who started their work early in the day getting the same compensation as those who only started late in the day. As with this man, it doesn't matter when people come to Jesus, but that they do. He accepts and welcomes them whenever and wherever. Do you forgive as easily as Jesus did? Are you open to be interrupted in your work to help someone meet Jesus, wherever you are?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you offer forgiveness to all people freely, without discrimination. Help me pass along the forgiveness and mercy you've shown me to the rest of the world at all times, wherever I am. Amen.

Remember: *"To err is human, to forgive, divine"*
~Alexander Pope~

Day 25 - Wednesday, 29 March 2017: The paralysed man's friends

Read: Mark 2:1-5

Think: I've always wondered whose house Jesus was in when the paralysed man's friends broke through the roof. It sounds like something students would do. I sometimes wonder if the paralysed man didn't injure himself by doing dangerous things like this with his friends...

The cause of paralysis aside, it is also important to note that Jesus doesn't heal the paralysed man immediately. He said: "Son, your sins are forgiven," then only healed him after rebuking the teachers who were around Him. Most revealing to me is that Jesus forgave the young man his sins after seeing what faith his *friends* had.

I once heard a preacher say: "I will do everything short of sinning to help people into the kingdom of heaven." Are you willing to do the same for the people you care for? Are you willing to do dangerous things to help people into God's presence and mercy? Do you carry your friends to Christ in prayer?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the opportunity we have to carry our friends and family into your presence through prayer. Help me to pray for them faithfully, without ceasing, until they get to meet you. Show me who else I can carry into your presence by prayer and which 'roofs' I need to break through to get them to you. Amen.

Remember: *"True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance. People describe intercession by saying, "It is putting yourself in someone else's place." That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God's place; it is having His mind and His perspective."*
~Oswald Chambers~

Day 26 - Thursday, 30 March 2017: A sinful woman anoints Jesus

Read: Luke 7:36-50

Think: Jesus attended a lot of dinner parties. In this story Jesus visits the home of Simon, a Pharisee. At this party we see a character standing behind Jesus, weeping, tears falling on Jesus' feet. She wipes them with her hair and pours perfume onto His feet, thereby, without knowing, anointing Him for what was to come (the crucifixion).

Jesus appears not to mention anything about this episode until Simon wonders at the legitimacy of Jesus as a prophet. Only after Jesus rebukes Simon and tells a parable to bring across His point does He speak to the unnamed woman; He tells her that her sins are forgiven and that she can go in (or into) peace.

This woman recognised her own sin, approached the One who can forgive all sin and made a sincere sacrifice when they met. Jesus accepted all of it, and her, with open arms.

Do you have much to bring before God? Do you believe He can forgive even your worst sin? Would you too like to be forgiven and to go in peace?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that your sacrifice on the cross gives me the opportunity to be forgiven. Thank you that I don't have to earn your forgiveness. Help me live a life of freedom to the glory of your name. Help me give you everything I have, the good and the bad, as a way of saying thank you. Amen.

Remember: *"I think that if God forgives us we must forgive ourselves. Otherwise, it is almost like setting up ourselves as a higher tribunal than Him."*
~C.S. Lewis~

Day 27 - Friday, 31 March 2017: Zacchaeus

Read: Luke 19:1-10

Think: Jesus was known as a man who spent lots of time with sinners. In those days Jews saw tax collectors as worse than sinners, because they were both corrupt and 'sell-outs' to the Roman empire. Zacchaeus must have been curious to see the Man everyone was talking about. Jesus, though, has a very specific plan for him. Jesus invites Himself for lunch at Zacchaeus' house in spite of what the crowd said and thought. Zacchaeus obviously repents and promises to set things right by those he wronged in the past. Jesus announces salvation and forgiveness to him and his house because of it. Here we see repentance preceding forgiveness, but what we see before all of this is Zacchaeus' sincerity evident by his curiosity. Jesus wasn't just another big name passing by to Zacchaeus. Jesus instilled enough curiosity in Zacchaeus that he was willing to face ridicule just to see Jesus. I wonder if Jesus chose to visit Zacchaeus, out of all the people there, because of Zacchaeus' hunger to see Him... Do you long to see Jesus with the same passion that Zacchaeus had? Do you too wish to right past wrongs?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you often give me opportunities to rectify wrongs committed in the past. Help me discern these and give me the courage to own up to my mistakes for the sake of your name. Amen.

Remember: *"The confessional is not a torture chamber, but the place in which the Lord's mercy motivates us to do better."*
~Pope Francis~

Day 28 - Saturday, 1 April 2017: Roman soldiers

Read: Luke 22:63-65; 23:33-34

Think: When Jesus was tried and crucified, the Roman soldiers were the ones carrying out the orders they received from their superiors. This didn't stop them from having a bit of 'fun' with the Prisoner. They blindfolded and beat Him in an attempt to mock Him. The irony is that Jesus knew each of them very well (Jesus being God), yet He remained silent. Only after they crucified Him does He pray for their forgiveness.

Jesus' very nature is to forgive, even in the face of great pain and irreverence.

Do you also forgive those who do evil against you? Do you carry bitterness and hatred in your heart? Do you pray for your enemies?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that your forgiveness is free for all to receive. Help me forgive as you have forgiven me. Help me show mercy to my enemies as you did and bring them to you in prayer. Amen.

Remember: *"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you."*

~C.S. Lewis~

3 - 8 April: Misguided Encounters

Sometimes people expected great things from Jesus, but often their expectations were misguided or even plain wrong at times. Jesus set them straight.

Day 29 - Monday, 3 April 2017: Salome

Read: Matthew 20:20-23

Think: Jesus once said that if you "ask... you will receive," (Matthew 7:7-8). Salome, the mother of two of the disciples, did exactly this. However, she didn't quite realise what she was asking. To Salome Jesus really was the Messiah, the promised one. She misunderstood, like so many other Jews at the time, what exactly the Messiah was sent to do. Her expectations were of a worldly kingdom, not a heavenly one. Therefore her request is a worldly one, not a heavenly one. Jesus also does not deny her request, but rectifies it by saying that those who want to be first, have to be last (Matthew 20:26-27). Her ambition for her sons were not sinful, only misguided. Jesus shows her the way the 'upside-down' kingdom of heaven will work. Do you have certain expectations of Jesus? Are those expectations rooted in His will? Are you willing to be the least?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the kingdom of heaven. Thank you that you have compassion with us, even when we are misguided. Help me by showing me the way your kingdom works and what my part in it is. Give me the courage to follow you faithfully, even if it means struggle and disappointment. Amen.

Remember: *"If we only had eyes to see and ears to hear and wits to understand, we would know that the Kingdom of God in the sense of holiness, goodness, beauty is as close as breathing and is crying out to be born both within ourselves and within the world."*
~Frederick Buechner~

Day 30 - Tuesday, 4 April 2017: The crowd in Capernaum

Read: John 6:60-66

Think: There was a time when Jesus was a 'big thing', like a celebrity would be today. He did many miracles and helped lots of people and I can imagine that many people were fascinated to see Him at work. However, Jesus shares who He is in more detail in the synagogue in Capernaum and His followers react in three different ways. Firstly, some of them, probably over the hype of his miracles and teachings, play down who He really is. "Surely He can't be from heaven, because we know Him!" (John 6:42). Secondly, others stop following Him when Jesus starts teaching difficult things to understand. Or rather, things that were not within their paradigm of how the world should work. Thirdly, some stay with Him, because He had the 'words of life,' and they recognise Him for who He really was (John 6:68-69).

Pray: Jesus, thank you for taking the time to teach me about your kingdom and about who you truly are. Help me keep my faith in you, especially when I don't understand. Help me to know you more deeply and love you better. Amen.

Remember: *"Suffering, failure, loneliness, sorrow, discouragement, and death will be part of your journey, but the Kingdom of God will conquer all these horrors. No evil can resist grace forever."*
~Brennan Manning~

Day 31 - Wednesday, 5 April 2017: Mary (Jesus' mother)

Read: Matthew 12:46-50

Think: Reading these verses can make it seem like Jesus didn't care for His biological family. That's not true, though {read *John 19:26-27*}. Jesus wasn't excluding any family member. He was including everyone who do the will of the Father. Paul later writes about our relationship with God in Romans 8:16-17.

So what does this mean for us today?

Firstly, it means we're included into God's family if we follow His ways and does what He teaches.

Secondly, it means we're *ALL* included in God's family. We have no right to usurp God's attention or monopolise it for only those we agree with. Jesus clearly says that being part of His family isn't only for a select few. Do you include others regardless of differences?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for drawing me into your family as I am. Help me include and welcome everyone, as you did, regardless of background or belief. Amen.

Remember: *"When you invite Jesus into your life, He brings His whole family."*
~Trevor Hudson~

Day 32 - Thursday, 6 April 2017: The rich young ruler

Read: Luke 18:18-30

Think: This young man misunderstood how salvation works. He thought by keeping the law he would earn his place in heaven. He may even have done it really well, seeing how he kept the law since he was a boy (Luke 18:21). Jesus then says that that's not good enough, unfortunately. The young man is told to sell all he owns, give it to the poor and follow Jesus. The young man's sadness at these words speaks of his misunderstanding. Jesus says that salvation is not in his own hands, but in the very capable hands of God.

In the world we live and grow up in, we're taught from a very young age that everything has a price. It's easy to assume that salvation does too. And it does. But we don't have to pay the price, because Jesus already did. And He offers it to us and everyone around us freely.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for taking salvation out of our hands and taking up the cross on our behalf. Help me live a life of gratitude that honours your sacrifice. Amen.

Remember: *"If man had his way, the plan of redemption would be an endless and bloody conflict. In reality, salvation was bought not by Jesus' fist, but by His nail-pierced hands; not by muscle but by love; not by vengeance but by forgiveness; not by force but by sacrifice. Jesus Christ our Lord surrendered in order that He might win; He destroyed His enemies by dying for them and conquered death by allowing death to conquer Him."*

~A.W. Tozer~

Day 33 - Friday, 7 April 2017: A certain woman's message

Read: Luke 11:27-28

Think: This lesser known interaction between Jesus and a woman in the crowd has slipped my notice for a very long time. However, I think it's significant, if only because Jesus chooses to respond to her comment. I don't know why this woman shouted out this comment. It may have been because she envied Mary as the mother of a famous person. It may be because she was in awe of the miracles Jesus did and the wisdom and power with which He answered the questions people asked Him. It may even have been a compliment aimed at Jesus rather than His mother. Jesus, however, shows us that she, too, is missing the point by telling her that there is something even better than this: those that hear the word of the Father and obey it are blessed. Do you hear the Father's words? Do you listen to Him?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you speak to me. Thank you that, through the Holy Spirit, I am able to hear you speak. Help me listen. Give me opportunities to listen to you and the courage to obey your words. Amen.

Remember: *"Our failure to hear His voice when we want to is due to the fact that we do not in general want to hear it, that we want it only when we think we need it."*
~Dallas Willard~

Day 34 - Saturday, 8 April 2017: Paul

Read: Acts 9:1-9

Think: Paul was a zealot for God. He did what he believed to be right with all his might. He followed the letter of Moses' law to the T. He obviously hated everyone who didn't. In modern terms I suppose you can call Paul (or Saul as he was known back then) an extremist. Paul never did anything that wasn't stated in the law. Persecuting heretics was part of that (Deuteronomy 13:6-10). Paul must have thought that these 'Christians' are advocating a different God to the Jewish one. He was wrong, so Jesus appears to him on the road to Damascus.

Jesus starts off with a question: "Why do you persecute me?" (Acts 9:4) almost as if Paul should know better. Paul, being a very religious man, knew *the law* better than he knew the *Law giver*.

We too can sometimes get caught up in following the rules instead of knowing Jesus. God is not so much interested in our offerings or our ability to do as He says than in us getting to know His heart.

Pray: Jesus, thank you for the guidelines you've given us. Forgive me for the times I fall short of your expectations. Help me get to know you more and live the way you lived. Amen.

Remember: *"An ever-growing, ever-constant relationship with God makes us certain of what we believe and enables us to run with endurance."*
~Katy Kauffman~

10 - 15 April: Come Dine With Me - Jesus Edition

Jesus often visited people at their homes. He even invited Himself once. We can learn a lot from how people act and react around Him when He comes to visit.

Day 35 - Monday, 10 April 2017: Martha & Mary

Read: Luke 10:38-42

Think: Jesus visits Martha and Mary's house. Mary sat at Jesus' feet while Martha was running around being the host. Jesus would have been well acquainted with the sisters. Martha and Mary were among the women who took care of Jesus during His ministry on earth.

When Jesus visits their house, Martha asks Jesus whether He's going to allow Mary to neglect her duty as co-host. Jesus replies that, even though duty is important, there is something even better, and that is sitting at the feet of Jesus. What drives your sense of duty? Do you take time out to just sit at the feet of Jesus?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you want to visit every person, me included. Thank you that you do not shy away or pass me by because of the state of my house and heart. Help me to accept your peace and acceptance as I sit at your feet and listen. Speak to me, Lord Jesus. I want to hear your voice. Amen.

Remember: *"Work without love is slavery."*
~Mother Teresa~

Day 36 - Tuesday, 11 April 2017: Pilate

Read: John 18:28-40

Think: Jesus' visit to Pilate's house wasn't completely voluntary. The Jewish leaders wanted Jesus dead, but they weren't allowed to kill Him. So they took Him to Pontius Pilate to do their dirty work.

The interaction between him and Jesus is significant, though. What Jesus says in response to Pilate's questioning is helpful for us to get to know more of Jesus and why He came to earth. What interests me at the moment, though, is that Jesus was inside Pilate's home and yet Pilate didn't recognise Him for who He was! Pilate even asked the right questions! Jesus answered him! And still Pilate missed the Messiah.

Read Matthew 25:31-46.

How often do you miss an opportunity to interact with Jesus? What if He didn't take the shape of a King, but of a servant? Would you still recognise Jesus for who He is?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for building your kingdom here on earth. Help me see you where you are and use every opportunity to meet with you, whatever that might look like. Amen.

Remember: *"Those who meet Jesus always experience either joy or its opposites, either foretastes of Heaven or foretastes of Hell. Not everyone who meets Jesus is pleased, and not everyone is happy, but everyone is shocked."*

~Peter Kreeft~

Day 37 - Wednesday, 12 April 2017: Peter's mother-in-law

Read: Matthew 8:14-15

Think: Peter was married and his mother-in-law lived with him and his wife. When Jesus visits Peter's house and hears of his mother-in-law's illness, Jesus immediately goes to her and touches her hand. She is healed on the spot, gets up and starts serving the guests.

Sometimes, when Jesus comes to visit, we may feel a sense of energy and readiness to change the world. Other times, we may feel less inclined.

Whatever the case may be, be sure of this: When Jesus heals someone or touches their life in some way, it will always be for His glory and to serve the church and community. How has Jesus touched your life? What can you do to serve the church and community in thankfulness?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for your healing power. Help me be a positive influence in my community and church, in my family and among friends, to the glory of your name only. Amen.

Remember: *"Jesus tends to his people individually. He personally sees to our needs. We all receive Jesus' touch. We experience his care."*
~Max Lucado~

Day 38 - Thursday, 13 April 2017: Herod

Read: Luke 23:8-12

Think: This Herod is the same one who had John the Baptist killed. He never knew Jesus personally, which explains why he was excited to meet Him. Even with prompts and questions, Jesus didn't answer him at all, which led to Herod and his soldiers mocking and abusing Jesus *{contrast this with the Syro-Phoenician woman in Matthew 15:21-28}*.

We too can easily become discouraged when God answers our prayers differently to what we were expecting. I think Herod's fascination with Jesus wasn't based on a sincere curiosity into who He was, but rather a curiosity fueled by hype and rumour. When Jesus didn't perform as Herod hoped for, he mocked Jesus. Do you get discouraged or disappointed when Jesus isn't where you expected Him to be or say what you expected Him to say?

Pray: Jesus, thank you that you want the best for me. Thank you that I can rely on you, whether I hear you speak clearly or not at all. Help me see you for who you are and not who I want you to be. Amen.

Remember: *"We want a god alright, but we humanize him enough to force him to be at our beck-and-call versus responding to the utter magnificence of His call."*
~Craig D. Lounsbrough~

Day 39 - Friday, 14 April 2017: The woman in Simon the Leper's house

Read: Matthew 26:6-13

Think: Though there were no recorded words spoken between this woman and Jesus, their interaction is still significant. It teaches me two things:
One: this episode gives Jesus an opportunity to teach His disciples about priorities, again. This woman's act of worship was looked down upon by the disciples. Jesus says that her sacrifice of expensive oil is accepted as it is given.

Two: It teaches me that it is sometimes good to receive a sincere gift. Like Mary who just sat at Jesus' feet, I too want sit and receive Jesus' teaching and wisdom, His love and power. Keep in mind, though, that this gift was an anointing for burial (as Jesus says in Matthew 26:12). The gift was not just for the sake of giving, it had a purpose. Do you receive gifts from God? What are their purposes?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for giving me opportunities to rest in you and receive from you. Help me use those times as the springboard into whatever you call me to do. Teach me to worship you in Spirit and in truth as an intimate act of surrendering to you. Amen.

Remember: *"And there's also 'To him that hath shall be given.' After all, you must have a capacity to receive, or even omnipotence can't give. Perhaps your own passion temporarily destroys the capacity."*
~C.S. Lewis~

Day 40 - Saturday, 15 April 2017: The travellers on the Emmaus Road

Read: Luke 24:13-16; 30-32

Think: What an amazing encounter! Two disciples walk 7 miles to their home. Jesus appears to them and they don't recognise Him. He teaches and explains to them what the prophets said and meant and still they don't recognise Him. Only when He breaks the bread and hands it to them do their eyes open and they see Him for who He is. I don't know why they didn't recognise Jesus while speaking to Him on the way, or why they were kept from recognising Him (Luke 24:16). What is interesting, though, is that it was by inviting Him in that they eventually recognised Him. When we put ourselves in a position to meet Jesus, we will not be disappointed. This is why spiritual disciplines are so important. They are the tools to help us meet with and learn from Christ. Do you have a regular place to meet with Jesus? Do you put yourself in a position to receive God's grace often?

Pray: Jesus, thank you for wanting to meet with me. Help me put things in place so that our meetings will have less distraction. Give me a hunger for your Word, your Spirit and your love. Ignite in me a fire of intercession and prayer. Make me passionate about what you are passionate about and teach me from your Word. Amen.

Remember: *"I must take care above all that I cultivate communion with Christ, for though that can never be the basis of my peace - mark that - yet it will be the channel of it."*
~C.H. Spurgeon~