



2021 WINTER  
LIFE GROUPS

LECTIONARY  
READINGS

## Introduction

During the next eight weeks of Life Groups, we will be discussing a portion of the lectionary readings assigned for the upcoming Sunday. If the term “lectionary” is unfamiliar to you, don’t worry! The lectionary is simply a list of Bible readings that correspond to the Christian Calendar (Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent, Easter, etc.). A full lectionary reading contains a passage from the Old and New Testament, the Gospels, and the Psalms, covering most of the Bible before repeating every three years.

This Life Group session starts in Epiphany – the season after Christmas that begins with the visit of the “wise men” and marks the manifestation of God in Christ to the world – and ends in Lent (see Week 3). Each week’s Gospel reading will serve as the springboard for the sermon we will hear the Sunday *after* our group discussions.

In addition to the Gospel reading, your group can also read and discuss the psalm for the upcoming Sunday before closing with a time of prayer.

As always, our goal is to use the Word of God as the foundation for our group discussions. The Bible is dynamic and rich and personal. Often each member of the group notices something different and can apply the text to their life in a unique way. For that reason, please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip any of the questions and topics suggested in the booklet. Let the Word of God do the work and use this tool in a way that meets the specific needs of your group.

As we study and discuss scripture together, remember the words of scholar and Anglican Bishop N.T. Wright: “If you want to know who God is, look at Jesus.” In the coming weeks, let’s look at Jesus together, asking Him to meet us, teach us, and change us.

## Overview of Scripture for mid-week discussion / the following Sunday

Week 1 (2/3)	Mark 1:29-39, Psalm 147:1-11
Week 2 (2/10)	Mark 9:2-9, Psalm 50:1-6
Week 3 (2/17)	Mark 1:9-15, Psalm 25:1-10 ( <b>Ash Wednesday, no Life Groups</b> )
Week 4 (2/24)	Mark 8:31-38, Psalm 22:23-31
Week 5 (3/3)	John 2:13-22, Psalm 19
Week 6 (3/10)	John 3:14-21, Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22
Week 7 (3/17)	John 12:20-33, Psalm 51:1-12
Week 8 (3/24)	John 12:12-19, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

## Holy Week

Palm Sunday 3/28 • Maundy Thursday 4/1 • Good Friday 4/2 • Easter 4/4

## Week 1: Mark 1:29-39 and Psalm 147:1-11

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend some time getting to know one another or catching up.

Optional Icebreaker: What was your favorite book, movie, tv series, or podcast of 2020?

*If you are able to screen share, watch NT Wright's "[Look at Jesus](https://vimeo.com/318559710)" video or view it on your own later. (<https://vimeo.com/318559710>)*

### Scriptural Context

Mark (the author of this Gospel) starts his narrative at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This scene occurs shortly after Jesus tells James, John, and Simon (Peter) to follow Him and He will make them "fishers of men." Throughout his Gospel, Mark emphasizes Jesus' actions that reveal Him to be the Son of God as well as Jesus' servanthood. Mark also shares several stories about Jesus casting out demons. Though this idea can sometimes offend our "modern" sensibilities, it is worth remembering scripture teaches us that just as God is at work in the world so is Satan (Ephesians 6:12). When Jesus casts out demons, we are reminded that He is God's final word and, in the end, evil will be vanquished and swallowed up in Jesus' goodness, justice, and mercy.

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### Mark 1:29-39

<sup>29</sup> As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew. <sup>30</sup> Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they immediately told Jesus about her. <sup>31</sup> So he went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

<sup>32</sup> That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. <sup>33</sup> The whole town gathered at the door, <sup>34</sup> and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was.

<sup>35</sup> Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup> Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup> and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"

<sup>38</sup> Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come." <sup>39</sup> So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images, or words stand out to you?
2. Look over the passage again and imagine that you are a bystander or one of the disciples. What would it feel like to be there? Which scenes or interactions are particularly striking to you? Share your impressions with the group.
3. Ephesians 6:12 reads, “For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.” Considering the scriptural context (see paragraph above the reading), how does this passage sit with you? In what ways could this view positively impact our collective and individual relationships?
4. Verse 35 says, “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, [Jesus] went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.” What might Jesus have been feeling that led Him to seek solitude? When do you most crave a “solitary place”? What do times of solitude look like for you? What most often keeps you from seeking solitude and prayer?
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## General Overview of the Book of Psalms

*The Book of Psalms is a collection of poems and songs composed by many people, the most prominent of which is King David. It is often called “the Bible’s prayer book,” and just as it did for the Jews in Jesus’ day, it informs many of the church’s hymns, songs, and prayers. For many Jews, all of the psalms were very familiar – if not known by heart. As Jesus died on the cross, He recited portions of psalms.*

### Psalm 147:1-11

<sup>1</sup> Praise the LORD.

How good it is to sing praises to our God,  
how pleasant and fitting to praise him!

<sup>2</sup> The LORD builds up Jerusalem;  
he gathers the exiles of Israel.

<sup>3</sup> He heals the brokenhearted  
and binds up their wounds.

<sup>4</sup> He determines the number of the stars  
and calls them each by name.

<sup>5</sup> Great is our Lord and mighty in power;  
his understanding has no limit.

<sup>6</sup> The LORD sustains the humble  
but casts the wicked to the ground.

<sup>7</sup> Sing to the LORD with grateful praise;  
make music to our God on the harp.

<sup>8</sup> He covers the sky with clouds;  
he supplies the earth with rain  
and makes grass grow on the hills.

<sup>9</sup> He provides food for the cattle  
and for the young ravens when they call.

<sup>10</sup> His pleasure is not in the strength of the  
horse,

nor his delight in the legs of the warrior;

<sup>11</sup> the LORD delights in those who fear him,  
who put their hope in his unfailing love.

1. What do you notice about this psalm? Do you see correlations to the reading from Mark (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

### Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Week 2: Mark 9:2-9 and Psalm 50:1-6

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend some time getting to know one another or catching up.

Optional Icebreaker: What is your favorite and least favorite thing about winter?

### Scriptural Context

In the previous chapter of Mark, Peter confessed he believed Jesus to be the Messiah, a savior Israel had long anticipated. After this confession, Jesus predicts His suffering and death, much to the disciples' dismay. The following passage is often referred to as "The Transfiguration of Jesus." This is when, for the first time, the disciples actually see Jesus in all His beauty, splendor, and magnificence. It is as though a curtain is lifted, and they witness Him in His glory, seeing Him as He truly is.

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### Mark 9:2-9

<sup>2</sup>After six days\* Jesus took Peter, James and John\* with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured\* before them. <sup>3</sup>His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses\*, who were talking with Jesus.

<sup>5</sup>Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here. Let us put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>(He did not know what to say, they were so frightened.)

<sup>7</sup>Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"\*

<sup>8</sup>Suddenly, when they looked around, they no longer saw anyone with them except Jesus. <sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus gave them orders not to tell anyone what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

\*Study Notes adapted from the NIV Study Bible

v. 2 – "six days" counts the days between Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ and the transfiguration.

"Peter, James and John" were the three disciples who had an especially close relationship to Jesus. "He was transfigured" means His appearance changed. The three disciples saw Jesus in His glorified state.

v. 4 – "Elijah and Moses" Moses (who delivered the Law to ancient Israel) appears as the representation of the old covenant and the promise of salvation, which was soon to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus and the new covenant He established. Elijah (who was a prophet in ancient Israel) appears as the appointed restorer of all things. Luke 9:31 says the three talked about Jesus' death.

v. 7 – "This is my son..." is similar to the words God spoke over Jesus when He was baptized.

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. Take a few minutes and try to imagine yourself as one of the disciples in this story. Imagine the hike up the mountain. Imagine what you might feel and see when Jesus is transfigured...when you hear God's voice...when you leave the mountain. Share your impressions with the group.
3. In what ways are Moses and Elijah's appearing significant? How does their particular presence further validate Jesus? (See note on v. 4 for more context.)
4. How do you think this event impacted the disciples going forward? How do you think it might have impacted Jesus himself?
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 50:1-6

<sup>1</sup>The Mighty One, God, the LORD,  
speaks and summons the earth  
from the rising of the sun to where it sets.

<sup>2</sup>From Zion, perfect in beauty,  
God shines forth.

<sup>3</sup>Our God comes and will not be silent;  
a fire devours before him,

and around him a tempest rages.

<sup>4</sup>He summons the heavens above,  
and the earth, that he may judge his people:

<sup>5</sup>"Gather to me this consecrated people,  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

<sup>6</sup>And the heavens proclaim his righteousness,  
for he is a God of justice.

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from Mark (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## **Week 3: Mark 1:9-15 and Psalm 25:1-10**

### **Ash Wednesday, No Life Groups**

Be sure to check your email or [christchurchkc.org](http://christchurchkc.org) for details about Ash Wednesday services.

### **What is LENT?**

This next session in Life Groups occurs during the church season of Lent. In the 40 days of Lent, we recall the 40 days Jesus spent alone, fasting in the wilderness, until His temptation by Satan. For centuries, Christians have used Lent as a time to honestly examine our own lives, looking for the things that keep us from fullness of life. We seek to “put to death” negative traits, bad habits, and harmful thought patterns in preparation for the celebration of resurrection – Easter!

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when Christians around the world are marked on the forehead with ash and “remember that we are dust and to dust we shall return” (Genesis 3:19). The Ash Wednesday service is heavy with poignant liturgy, penitence, and encouraging reminders of God’s promised forgiveness for those with contrite hearts who hope in Jesus.

While we prepare for Easter, may we grow together in Christ-likeness, setting aside our words, thoughts, and actions that we know are wrong. As we look to Jesus, may we be filled with new hope in the promise and power of His resurrection.

### **Scriptures for Sunday, February 21**

**Mark 1:9-15**

**Psalm 25:1-10**

## Week 4: Mark 8:31-38 and Psalm 22:23-31

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend a few minutes checking in.

Optional Icebreaker: Describe your experience (if any) with Lent. Are you adopting any new disciplines this Lent or giving something up?

### Scriptural Context

This scene occurs just after Peter confessed Jesus to be the long anticipated Jewish Messiah. As Jesus foretells His impending death, the disciples are horrified. The Messiah whom they anticipated is the one who will lead Israel into victory and overthrow Roman rule, not one who will be rejected and killed by His own people. When Peter rebukes Jesus for this idea, Jesus in return rebukes Satan. This emphasizes that Jesus' battle is not against human enemies but against the unseen rulers and perpetrators of evil in the world – all who are ultimately defeated in Jesus' atoning death and resurrection.

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### Mark 8:31-38

<sup>31</sup> He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.

<sup>33</sup> But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."

<sup>34</sup> Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. <sup>36</sup> What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? <sup>37</sup> Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? <sup>38</sup> If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. Put yourself in the disciples' shoes as Jesus crushes their expectations by describing His impending suffering and death. What emotions do you imagine they felt? Can you think of a time when your hopes were dashed? What range of emotions did you experience in the moment and in the days that followed?
3. Jesus makes a distinction between human concerns and the concerns of God (v. 33). Then He teaches the crowd and disciples in v. 34-38. Working through each of those verses, try to determine the difference between how we typically view the world and make our way in it (human concerns), and what Jesus says is the way we should understand and operate in the world (concerns of God).
4. In v. 36, Jesus says it is no good to gain the whole world but forfeit the soul. How might that idea have struck the disciples in the light of their hopes for what the Messiah would do (overthrow Rome and establish Israel's government)? How do we try to "gain the world" in our own individual ways (control, acquisition, etc.)? We can fall into these patterns over the course of a lifetime or daily. Describe a time in your own experience when these particular words of Jesus have rung true.
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 22:23-31

<sup>23</sup>You who fear the LORD, praise him!  
All you descendants of Jacob, honor him!  
Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!

<sup>24</sup>For he has not despised or scorned  
the suffering of the afflicted one;  
he has not hidden his face from him  
but has listened to his cry for help.

<sup>25</sup>From you comes the theme of my praise in  
the great assembly; before those who fear you  
I will fulfill my vows.

<sup>26</sup>The poor will eat and be satisfied;  
those who seek the LORD will praise him—  
may your hearts live forever!

<sup>27</sup>All the ends of the earth

will remember and turn to the LORD,  
and all the families of the nations  
will bow down before him,

<sup>28</sup>for dominion belongs to the LORD  
and he rules over the nations.

<sup>29</sup>All the rich of the earth will feast and  
worship; all who go down to the dust will kneel  
before him—

those who cannot keep themselves alive.

<sup>30</sup>Posterity will serve him; future generations  
will be told about the Lord.

<sup>31</sup>They will proclaim his righteousness,  
declaring to a people yet unborn:  
He has done it!

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from Mark (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Week 5: John 2:13-22 and Psalm 19

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend a few minutes checking in.

Optional Icebreaker: What are some of your favorite signs of spring, or what outdoor activity are you most looking forward to with the return of fairer weather?

### Scriptural Context

Passover is one of the most important Jewish holy days. As required by Jewish law, Jews from all over came to Jerusalem to buy and sacrifice an animal near the temple. The merchants who sold the animals set up shop in the outer court of the temple itself. The outer court was the *only* place where Gentiles could come to pray. Additionally, the money changers, though necessary because of all the different currencies, should not have set up shop in the temple itself. (Adapted from the NIV Study Bible)

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### John 2:13-22

<sup>13</sup> When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. <sup>15</sup> So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. <sup>16</sup> To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” <sup>17</sup> His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”

<sup>18</sup> The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” <sup>19</sup> Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”

<sup>20</sup> They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” <sup>21</sup> But the temple he had spoken of was his body. <sup>22</sup> After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. In light of the scriptural context, why do you think the actions of the merchants and money changers made Jesus so angry? What does His anger reveal about Him and the things He cares most about?
3. Imagine how this event would have impacted the Jewish leaders who oversaw the temple. What adjectives could describe what you think they may have felt? How does this affect all their future interactions with Jesus, ultimately leading in their decision to have Him crucified?
4. Jesus says, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days” (v. 19). The disciples do not understand Jesus’ words until after His death and resurrection (v. 22). Describe an event in your life in which God’s purposes took on more significance or became clearer as time went by. How has that affected your faith and trust in God?
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 19

<sup>1</sup>The heavens declare the glory of God;  
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

<sup>2</sup>Day after day they pour forth speech;  
night after night they reveal knowledge.

<sup>3</sup>They have no speech, they use no words;  
no sound is heard from them.

<sup>4</sup>Yet their voice goes out into all the earth,  
their words to the ends of the world.

In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

<sup>5</sup> It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber,  
like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

<sup>6</sup>It rises at one end of the heavens  
and makes its circuit to the other;  
nothing is deprived of its warmth.

<sup>7</sup>The law of the LORD is perfect,  
refreshing the soul.

The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,  
making wise the simple.

<sup>8</sup>The precepts of the LORD are right,  
giving joy to the heart.

The commands of the LORD are radiant,  
giving light to the eyes.

<sup>9</sup>The fear of the LORD is pure,  
enduring forever.

The decrees of the LORD are firm,  
and all of them are righteous.

<sup>10</sup>They are more precious than gold,  
than much pure gold;  
they are sweeter than honey,  
than honey from the honeycomb.

<sup>11</sup>By them your servant is warned;  
in keeping them there is great reward.

<sup>12</sup>But who can discern their own errors?  
Forgive my hidden faults.

<sup>13</sup>Keep your servant also from willful sins;  
may they not rule over me.

Then I will be blameless,  
innocent of great transgression.

<sup>14</sup>May these words of my mouth and this  
meditation of my heart  
be pleasing in your sight,  
LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from John (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Week 6: John 3:14-21 and Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend a few minutes checking in.

Optional Icebreaker: Share or paraphrase one of your favorite Bible verses or stories and briefly describe why it resonates with you.

### Scriptural Context

Jesus begins this passage by referencing a story from Israel's days in the desert. In Numbers 21, the Israelites were complaining about their newfound freedom from Egypt; they were wandering in the wilderness and doubted God. Rather than depend on God and His provision, they wished for the certainty of food and water that came with their enslavement. As a result, God sent venomous snakes into their camp. Many who were bitten died, but God had Moses make a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Anyone who was bitten could look up at the snake and live. (This is where the modern symbol of medicine, a snake wrapped around a pole, was derived.) Jesus is foretelling His death when He will be lifted up on the cross. Anyone who looks to the crucified Jesus for salvation lives.

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### John 3:14-21

<sup>14</sup> Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."

<sup>16</sup> For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. <sup>18</sup> Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.

<sup>19</sup> This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed. <sup>21</sup> But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God."

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. Take a minute to have someone read Numbers 21:4-9:

<sup>4</sup>They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way; <sup>5</sup>they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!"

<sup>6</sup>Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died. <sup>7</sup>The people came to Moses and said, "We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us." So Moses prayed for the people. <sup>8</sup>The LORD said to Moses, "Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live." <sup>9</sup>So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, they lived.

Thousands of years span these two stories: Moses and the snake and Jesus' death on a cross. What parallels can you draw between these events and this reading from John?

3. What are the similarities between the Israelites and the world/people Jesus refers to? What do you think Jesus means when He says the people loved darkness? How is it similar to the way the Israelites longed for the "security" of their enslavement? What are the similarities between the ways they are saved?
4. Can you think of a time in your life, maybe even as a child, when something wrong you did or fear you felt was brought to light? What do you remember feeling before and after? How can bringing our guilt, fears, or wrong actions "to light" bring healing or freedom?
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the LORD tell their story—  
those he redeemed from the hand of the foe,

<sup>3</sup> those he gathered from the lands,  
from east and west, from north and south.

<sup>17</sup> Some became fools through their rebellious  
ways and suffered affliction because of their  
iniquities.

<sup>18</sup> They loathed all food and drew near the

gates of death.

<sup>19</sup> Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble,  
and he saved them from their distress.

<sup>20</sup> He sent out his word and healed them;  
he rescued them from the grave.

<sup>21</sup> Let them give thanks to the LORD for his  
unfailing love and his wonderful deeds for  
mankind.

<sup>22</sup> Let them sacrifice thank offerings  
and tell of his works with songs of joy.

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from John (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Week 7: John 12:20-33, Psalm 51:1-12

### First 10-15 Minutes

Spend a few minutes checking in.

Optional Icebreaker: A year ago this month “Stay at Home Orders” were first issued due to the pandemic. Share a lasting personal impact or change from the pandemic or something you appreciate more than you did a year ago.

### Scriptural Context

The time (“hour”) has come for Jesus to face His death. Jesus faced the prospect of becoming sin (or a sin offering) for sinful people. He considered praying for God to save Him from this death but refused to because the very reason He had come was to die. His death will also ultimately result in Satan’s (“the prince of this world”) downfall and defeat. (Adapted from the [NIV Study Bible](#))

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### John 12:20-33

<sup>20</sup> Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the festival.\* <sup>21</sup> They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir,” they said, “we would like to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went to tell Andrew; Andrew and Philip in turn told Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. <sup>25</sup> Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.

<sup>27</sup> “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. <sup>28</sup> Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” <sup>29</sup> The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him.

<sup>30</sup> Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. <sup>31</sup> Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.

\*Study Notes adapted from the NIV Study Bible

v. 20 – “Greeks” probably means “God-fearers,” people attracted to Judaism by its monotheism and morality but repelled by its nationalism and requirements such as circumcision. They worshiped in the synagogues but did not convert. The “festival” is the Passover feast.

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. One synonym for “dies” is “to relinquish life.” What kinds of things must be “relinquished” or “hated” in order to follow Jesus? What kinds of things are hard for you personally or our American culture to relinquish? Why do you think Jesus chose the metaphor of a seed?
3. Reread v. 26. Discuss some of the people and places Jesus spends time with throughout the Gospels. What do you think that means for us in light of this passage?
4. Imagine you witness the scene described in the last verses. What might you feel as you hear Jesus’ words? What might you feel when you hear the voice from heaven?
5. What does Jesus say will happen when He dies (v. 31-32)? How do these words spoken by the German pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer shed light on this passage?

“In our lives we don’t speak readily of victory. It is too big a word for us. We have suffered too many defeats in our lives: victory has been thwarted again and again by too many weak hours, too many gross sins. But isn’t it true that the spirit within us yearns for this word, for the final victory over the sin and anxious fear of death in our lives? And now God’s word also says nothing to us about our victory; it doesn’t promise us that we will be victorious over sin and death from now on; rather, it says with all its might that someone has won this victory, and that this person, if we have him as Lord, will also win the victory over us. It is not we who are victorious, but Jesus.”  
(Bonhoeffer’s “Christus Victor” address, Nov. 26, 1939)

6. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
7. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 51:1-12

<sup>1</sup> Have mercy on me, O God,  
according to your unfailing love;  
according to your great compassion  
blot out my transgressions.

<sup>2</sup> Wash away all my iniquity  
and cleanse me from my sin.

<sup>3</sup> For I know my transgressions,  
and my sin is always before me.

<sup>4</sup> Against you, you only, have I sinned  
and done what is evil in your sight;  
so you are right in your verdict  
and justified when you judge.

<sup>5</sup> Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time  
my mother conceived me.

<sup>6</sup> Yet you desired faithfulness even in the

womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret  
place.

<sup>7</sup> Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean;  
wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

<sup>8</sup> Let me hear joy and gladness;  
let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

<sup>9</sup> Hide your face from my sins  
and blot out all my iniquity.

<sup>10</sup> Create in me a pure heart, O God,  
and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

<sup>11</sup> Do not cast me from your presence  
or take your Holy Spirit from me.

<sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation  
and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from John (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group.

## Week 8: John 12:12-19 and Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

### First 5-10 minutes

Spend a few minutes checking in.

Optional Icebreaker: What is something you've read, watched or listened to that you have really enjoyed lately?

### Scriptural Context

Word spread that Jesus was making His way to Jerusalem for Passover. Most of the Jews saw this as the moment they had longed anticipated – the Messiah was entering Jerusalem to overthrow Roman occupation and rule. The people shouted “Hosanna!” that can be translated as “Save us, please!” The Jews were not wrong to hope for a Messiah who would set things right in the world. However, their scope was too limited. Jesus was more than a political hero who would overthrow the tyranny of Rome. He came to oust “the prince of this world” (John 12:31) and reclaim us as His own, freeing us from the tyranny of sin and death. Just days after shouting “Hosanna!” many of these same people would turn against Jesus; He was not the kind of Messiah they had expected. With the threat of a revolt removed, the religious leaders will finally be free to condemn Jesus to death.

Read through the passage silently once, then have one person read the passage for the group.

### John 12:12-19

<sup>12</sup> The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. <sup>13</sup> They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the king of Israel!”

<sup>14</sup> Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, as it is written: <sup>15</sup> “Do not be afraid, Daughter Zion; see, your king is coming, seated on a donkey’s colt.”

<sup>16</sup> At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.\*

<sup>17</sup> Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. <sup>18</sup> Many people, because they had heard that he had performed this sign, went out to meet him. <sup>19</sup> So the Pharisees said to one another, “See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!”

\*Study Notes adapted from the NIV Study Bible

v. 15 and 16 – *Prophecies are fulfilled during this event that the disciples later recognize, such as Zechariah 9:9.*

## Discussion Questions

*Each number represents a different topic in the story with various questions to help guide and develop your discussion. Please feel liberty to adapt, expand, or skip questions as best suits your group. After you discuss the Gospel reading, you can read and discuss the psalm if time allows or read it on your own later in the week. Be sure to end your time together with group prayer.*

1. What do you notice about this passage? What themes or actions seem important? What ideas, images or words stand out to you?
2. Considering the context of this event, imagine yourself as a participant. What might you feel and experience? What does the energy of the crowd feel like?
3. Now think back to a time when your expectations fell woefully short of reality. How did that feel in the moment and as time went on? How does this help you understand the people and events leading up to Jesus' death?
4. Take a minute or two to think if there is anything in your life, or circle of family and friends, which makes you want to shout "Hosanna—Save us, please!" If you're comfortable, share a little bit about the situation with the group. (You can pray together about these things now or when you wrap up the group time with prayer.)
5. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?
6. Any parting thoughts before we move onto prayer or to the psalm?

## Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

<sup>1</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

<sup>2</sup> Let Israel say: "His love endures forever."

<sup>19</sup> Open for me the gates of the righteous;  
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

<sup>20</sup> This is the gate of the LORD  
through which the righteous may enter.

<sup>21</sup> I will give you thanks, for you answered me;  
you have become my salvation.

<sup>22</sup> The stone the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;

<sup>23</sup> the LORD has done this,  
and it is marvelous in our eyes.

<sup>24</sup> The LORD has done it this very day;  
let us rejoice today and be glad.

<sup>25</sup> LORD, save us! LORD, grant us success!

<sup>26</sup> Blessed is he who comes in the name of the  
LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.

<sup>27</sup> The LORD is God,  
and he has made his light shine on us.

With boughs in hand, join in the festal  
procession up to the horns of the altar.

<sup>28</sup> You are my God, and I will praise you;  
you are my God, and I will exalt you.

<sup>29</sup> Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;  
his love endures forever.

1. What do you notice about this passage? Do you see correlations to the reading from John (repeated themes, ideas, or words)?
2. What does this psalm say about God and what He is like? What attributes can we praise and thank Him for?
3. Which verse or idea brings you the most comfort or correction? How might it change your mind, views, or habits as you think about it over the next several days?

## Group Prayer

Share any burdens or thanksgivings you bring with you and pray together as a group, including anything that was shared in your group discussion.



# Christ Church

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