

Monday November 14 ~ John 10:7-18

The Bible has much to say about the identity of Jesus. He is the Son of God, the Messiah, the King of kings and so much more. In the Gospels, Jesus often talks about himself cryptically, revealing his true nature in parable and metaphor. John's Gospel includes what are called, "I am" statements, through which Jesus reveals himself to be "Bread of Life," "Living Water," "the Good Shepherd," "the Gate," and so much more.

- What does it mean that Jesus is "the Way"? What does it mean to you that Jesus is "the Good Shepherd"? Read Psalm 23 and think about how Jesus fills the role of shepherd in your life?
- Prayer: *Shepherding God, lead me to abundant life. Guide me and protect me today and every day. Amen.*

Tuesday November 15 ~ Matthew 16:13-17, 20

When Jesus asks his disciples about the "word on the street," they tell them what they've heard. When he asks them what they believe, Peter affirms that Jesus is the Messiah. However, Jesus insists that they not tell anyone (that he is the Messiah). Remember that the Hebrew word for "messiah" means "deliverer" or "anointed one" and that "christ" is the Greek equivalent.

- Can you think of reasons Jesus would *not* want to spread the word that he is the Messiah? What kind of Messiah do you think the people were expecting?
- Prayer: *Saving God, I believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that he will deliver me from the power of sin and death. Amen.*

Wednesday November 16 ~ Matthew 16:21, Romans 5:16-21

One reason Jesus does not want the disciples to announce that he is the Messiah is because he is not the kind of Messiah the people were expecting. He is going to be a suffering servant, not a military hero. Jesus will "deliver" the people through his death and resurrection. The Christian message is that we (humanity) can only be saved by grace. We need the grace that God offers through Jesus' death and resurrection.

- Why do *you* need to have a relationship with Jesus? Remember: there is a difference between what you want and what you need.
- Prayer: *Merciful God, I need your grace. I believe it is the only way I can have a relationship with you. Amen.*

Thursday November 17 ~ Matthew 16:13-19

Many people believe in North America believe in God but have no desire to be part of a church. Even among active church members there are a variety of reasons why the church is important to them. It is easy to think of church simply as a worthwhile human institution and forget that Jesus founded the church. According to the NRSV translation of the New Testament, Jesus says, "you are Peter, and on this rock I will build **my church**" (emphasis added.)

- Why is church participation important to you? Is it simply a good thing to do, or do you *need* the church? Why do you think Jesus founded the church
- Prayer: *God of history, thank you for the church. Help me remember that I need to be in a Christian community. Amen.*

Friday November 18 ~ Colossians 1:9-23a

The New Testament consistently describes the church as the Body of Christ, declaring that Jesus (the) Christ is the head of the Body. This means that (1) the church continues the "bodily" ministry of Jesus in the world, doing what Jesus did in his earthly ministry, and (2) that individually, we are "members" of the body (1 Corinthians 12:27).

- How have you been joined to other believers as a member of the body of Christ? Have you made your gifts and abilities available to Jesus? How is God using you to transform the world?
- Prayer: *Transforming God, I'm willing to serve you today. Use me in your eternal project to change the world. Amen.*

Saturday November 19 ~ Hebrews 10:12-25

One of the reasons we need the church is because the church helps us to be the people God wants us to be. The church is the place where we can make and keep the commitments that change our life: worshipping, growing, serving, sharing, and giving. Christian discipleship is not a self-help project. It is a group effort, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Remember Hebrews 10:24-25 whenever you are tempted to go it alone.

- What help do you need to become the person God wants you to become? What can (what will) you do to help someone else?
- Prayer: *Loving God, my life is incomplete without you and other people. Help me be the person you want me to be. Amen.*