



Gospel Portraits of Jesus: A Lenten Study

SESSION 1

Jesus is the name given by the messenger of the Lord to the One who would be born of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Overview of the Course

Welcome to a six-week course that will explore a number of the names and titles for Jesus that appear in the four Gospels. My hope and prayer is that this course will be a challenging, nurturing, and inspiring time for you and the members of your group as you engage in discussions about significant biblical concepts and key portions of the Bible, primarily the Gospels. There is so much material in the New Testament related to the names and titles of Jesus that I have had to limit the focus to the Gospels, while also paying some attention to relevant Old Testament passages.

The sequence of the names and titles of Jesus for our course of study moves from the most familiar name, *Jesus*, to Jesus' activities as *teacher*, to several common metaphors such as *bread*, to more abstract names like *Messiah* and *Son of God*, concluding with a focus on *resurrection* and *life*. The first half of the course will be a little easier to discuss, while the last three sessions provide more of a challenge.

Goal for the Session

Jesus is the most frequently used name for the person of Jesus in the New Testament. After gaining an understanding of the meaning of the name *Jesus*, participants will explore the Gospel of Mark to identify how Jesus related to various groups of people and how they responded to him. In addition, participants will be guided to relate their reading and reflection to their own personal faith and life journeys.

Session at a Glance

OPENING

- Welcome
- Candle lighting
- Prayer
- Introductions
- Course overview

EXPLORING

- Names and titles of Jesus
- Results of skimming
- Reactions to Jesus' actions
- Comparing notes

RESPONDING

- Speaking about Jesus
- Reflective questions

CLOSING

- Preparing for next session
- Closing hymn

Preparing for the Session

- If you have preregistration for your study, and have e-mail addresses for each participant, send the Participant Handout one week before each session. (You will want to do this each week for those who prefer to receive them in that format.)

- Provide additional copies of the Participant Handout for those who did not receive one ahead of time.
- Make extra copies of the two resource sheets found at the end of this Leader's Guide so that each participant will have one.
- Read the Participant Handout for this session and make notes or underline those parts that you want to reference during the session.
- Read all of the Bible passages referenced in the Participant Handout. It will be most helpful to you if you are able to use a study Bible.
- You will find yourself better prepared if you are able to use a Bible commentary to gain additional background for the key passages of the session.
- Since members of the group will be using their Bibles and working with resource sheets, it will be helpful if everyone can be seated at tables. If the group is small enough, gather around one table or an arrangement of tables where you can be seated with them and they can see everyone. If it is not possible for participants to be seated at tables, consider providing a lapboard, or stiff sheet of cardboard.
- If you think participants will not know each other's names, provide self-adhesive name tags and marking pens.
- If possible, provide coffee, tea, and hot chocolate.
- Arrange to have a few extra copies of the Bible available, since some will probably come without one. We will be using NRSV Bibles throughout the course, but other translations will be useful as well.
- You will need a newsprint easel and markers, or access to a whiteboard or chalkboard.
- Provide some extra pencils.
- Provide a large candle with matches to use for the opening activity.
- If you are not comfortable leading the group in singing, check ahead of time to see if someone attending the study will be willing to lead the hymn. The hymn will be included at the close of each session of the course.
- Make copies of next session's Participant Handout to distribute to those who prefer to receive hard cop-

ies, and after the session send an e-mail attachment of the handout to the others in the study.

- And most importantly, pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you in your planning and leading, and lift up a prayer of intercession for each member of the group.



Teaching Tip

Since this is the first session of the course, it will take a little more time to get started with the group than in other sessions. You may not accomplish as much in the exploring and responding parts of this first session as you would like, and that is OK. Manage the time as best you can.

Opening (10 minutes)

1. Welcome

Greet participants as they arrive. If you use name tags, encourage each person to make a name tag emphasizing first names. And, if you have arranged for hot beverages, invite everyone to help him or herself.

2. Candle Lighting

Place the large candle in the center of the table or in a place where all can see it. Light the candle and say the words, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). Comment that fire and light have been symbols of God's presence throughout the history of God's people.



Teaching Tip: Print the above psalm verse on a sheet of newsprint or whiteboard so that participants can recite it with you as you light the candle.

3. Prayer

Lead the group in the following brief litany prayer. Write on newsprint or whiteboard the response that participants will say in unison after each statement, **Help me, Lord Jesus.**

Jesus said, "Follow me."

Jesus said, "Love one another."

Jesus said, "Your faith has made you well."

Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

Jesus said, "Who do you say that I am?"

4. Introductions

Invite participants to introduce themselves briefly by stating their names and sharing a response to the question, “What is an early memory you have of hearing and learning about Jesus?”

5. Course Overview

Provide a brief overview of the course, emphasizing the nature of the course in your own words. Call attention to the daily Bible readings at the end of each Participant Handout. These readings will provide the essential biblical material for each session.

Exploring (20 minutes)

6. Names and Titles of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

Because of the number of names of Jesus in the Gospels, and the number of times the name *Jesus* appears, we need to limit the scope of our exploring to just the Gospel of Mark. Assign each member of the study one chapter from Mark (since chapter 16 is short, assign it to the person with chapter 15). Ask them to skim quickly the assigned chapter, looking for all the names and titles of Jesus they can find, and to write them on a blank sheet of paper.



Teaching Tip: If you have fewer than fifteen participants, begin with chapter 1 of Mark and assign as many chapters as you have participants. If you have more than fifteen participants, assign pairs to work on chapters and divide the chapters in half so each is skimming a different portion.

7. Results of Skimming

After five minutes of skimming, ask the participants to report all the names and titles of Jesus they have found. Record them on newsprint or whiteboard. Note that in each chapter they found the name “Jesus,” plus one or more names and titles. Tell them the group will explore most of these names and titles throughout the course. Also, state that it is clear that no one name or title was sufficient to identify the fullness of who Jesus was. The same is true today; we need multiple names and titles of Jesus to express our thoughts and beliefs about him.

8. Reactions to Jesus’ Actions

In Mark’s Gospel there are many miraculous actions of Jesus and in each instance there are responses of persons present. We will focus on ten of the actions of Jesus. Distribute “Resource Sheet 1: Jesus’ Actions and People’s Reactions.” Ask participants to work in pairs. Assign each pair a different passage. The instructions are on the resource sheet. It should not take more than five minutes for them to read their brief passage and answer the three questions.



Teaching Tip: If you have fewer than twenty participants, work on as many passages as you have pairs. If you have an uneven number in your group, you could work with someone to make it even. If you have more than twenty, assign three to four persons to each group.

9. Comparing Notes

You will not have enough time for each small group to make a complete report. Ask the whole group to respond generally to each of the questions. The important information to discuss is the various responses of individuals and groups of people to Jesus.

Responding (10 minutes)

10. Speaking about Jesus

Ask the participants to put themselves in the role of someone other than Jesus in the narrative. Then, ask them to speak in the first person responding to the question, “What are some of your thoughts and feelings about Jesus?” Allow about five minutes for this. In this activity you are aiming at getting the participants to talk about Jesus. If they are comfortable talking about Jesus in the role of another, perhaps they will be able to speak about Jesus at work in their own lives.



Teaching Tip: If you are running out of time, skip the above activity and move directly to the discussion question below.

11. Reflective Questions

To bring to a close their work on the various aspects of their skimming and reading of Mark, take a few minutes to reflect on one or two of the following questions.

- What are some of your observations about the nature of Jesus' ministry?
- What are some comparisons you would make between responses of the people to Jesus in the Gospel of Mark and the responses of people to Jesus today?
- Or, a question of your own.

Closing (5 minutes)

12. Preparing for Next Session

Thank participants for attending this first session and for their participation. Distribute copies of the Participant Handout to those who prefer to receive the printed copies and remind the others that you will send an e-mail attachment with the Participant Handout. Call attention to the daily readings on page 5. Encourage participants to try to read all the passages before next session. Tell those who prefer to receive the Participant Handout as an e-mail attachment that you will send it the next day.

13. Closing Hymn

Distribute copies of "Resource Sheet 2: 'O Jesus, You Were Born to Be.'" Conclude the session by singing the first stanza of the hymn written for this course by Rev. Carolyn Gillette.

Teaching Alternatives

- Instead of using resource sheet 1 as suggested in activity 8 above, focus on one or more of the key pas-

sages in the Participant Handout. For instance, you could select the Jesus in Nazareth (Mark 6:1–6) or the Jesus and the Children (Mark 9:33–37; 10:13–16) passages. Divide the group into two groups, each with a different passage, to answer the same questions that are on resource sheet 1.

- Plan for a debate instead of the role identification in activity 10. Divide into three small groups: disciples, crowd, and religious leaders. Each group meets for five minutes to decide what their impressions are of Jesus based on the skimming and reading they did for the previous activities. They begin their reflection with the question, "What do you admire and/or wonder about this man, Jesus?"

For More Information

The notes in a good study Bible will help with your study and preparation. Several possibilities are:

The Discipleship Study Bible: NRSV with Apocrypha (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008).

The New Interpreter's Study Bible: NRSV with Apocrypha (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003).

The Access Bible: NRSV with Apocrypha (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Key Scriptures

Matthew 1:18–25

Mark 2:1–12; 4:35–41; 6:1–6; 9:33–37; 10:13–16; and 10:17–31

Luke 1:26–38 and 4:16–30

Resource Sheet 1

Jesus' Actions and People's Reactions

Instructions

Work in pairs. Each pair work with one of the following passages.

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Mark 1:16–20 | Jesus calls four disciples |
| 2. Mark 1:21–28 | Jesus heals man with unclean spirit |
| 3. Mark 1:29–34 | Jesus heals many at Simon's house |
| 4. Mark 1:40–45 | Jesus heals leper |
| 5. Mark 2:1–12 | Jesus heals paralytic |
| 6. Mark 2:13–17 | Jesus calls Levi |
| 7. Mark 3:1–6 | Jesus heals man with withered hand |
| 8. Mark 4:35–41 | Jesus stills the storm |
| 9. Mark 5:21–24a; 35–43 | Jesus heals Jairus' daughter |
| 10. Mark 5:24b–34 | Jesus heals woman with hemorrhage |

Answer these three questions based on your passage.

1. What was the situation and Jesus' action?
2. What were the results of Jesus' action?
3. What were the reactions of the people to Jesus' action?

Resource Sheet 2

O Jesus, You Were Born to Be

TRURO LM

1. O Jesus, you were born to be
God's gift to save humanity;
And one great day we're moving toward,
All life will bow and call you Lord!

2. You taught the people every day
As Rabbi, Teacher of the Way;
O Master, may we learn from you
To love both God and neighbor, too.

3. You are the Bread that satisfies,
The Light that guides us through our lives,
The Gate that leads us safely home,
The Shepherd calling to your own.

4. You are Messiah, you are Christ,
Anointed One, God's sacrifice.
In you, God's mercy is revealed:
We're saved from sin, forgiven, healed.

5. O Son of God and Son of Man,
You trusted and obeyed God's plan;
The poor, the sick and those in need
Cried, "Son of David, set us free!"

6. O Jesus, you're the living Way,
The Resurrection, God's new Day.
You give us hope and make us new;
How wondrous is our life in you!

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The text was written to be sung to one of two common hymn tunes. Most denominational hymnals have a tune index at the back of the hymnal and you may look for one of these tunes there. You may also search the Internet for the tune and find a copy of the music.

Tune option 1: Truro is the name of the tune. It is found in the Presbyterian Hymnal #8 called "Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates." It is also found in other hymnals and at the United Methodist Church's Web site at <http://www.gbod.org/worship/music/lift.pdf>.

Tune option 2: Tallis' Canon is the name of the tune. It may be found in the new Evangelical Lutheran Church's hymnal on page 278 ("All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night") or the Presbyterian Hymnal #542. It also exists in many other hymnals.



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SESSION 1

Jesus is the name given by the messenger of the Lord to the One who would be born of Mary by the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Lenten Study

Our study in these weeks leading to Easter will focus on some of the many names and titles by which Jesus was known or addressed. We will spend most of our time with passages in the four Gospels. You will find at the end of each session a series of daily Bible passages. You can read the suggested passages each day the week prior to the group study or you can read them following the study. Either way, you will find that these selected passages will help you focus on the week's featured names or titles of Jesus. One of the goals of this study is that participants will be able to reaffirm their knowledge of and belief in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The theme passage for this first session is Philippians 2:1–11 where the apostle Paul, from prison, writes to his friends in Philippi of his belief in Jesus as God incarnate. Read the whole passage and notice particularly verses 9–11, “Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend . . . and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The Meaning of the Name “Jesus”

As we might expect, our first encounter with the name *Jesus* is in the birth narratives of Matthew and Luke. Though these accounts of his birth are quite different,



The name *Jesus* in Greek is the same as the Hebrew name *Joshua*, which means “God saves” or “God’s salvation.”

both explain that the name of the child to be born of Mary is given by a messenger from God. In Matthew “an angel of the Lord appeared to [Joseph]” (1:20), while in Luke “the angel Gabriel was sent by God . . . to a virgin . . . [named] Mary” (1:26, 27). Joseph is told by the angel “you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). After being told by the angel Gabriel not to be afraid, that she would conceive and bear a son, Mary is told, “you will name him Jesus” (Luke 1:31). The name was confirmed again in the Luke narrative. “After eight days had passed, it was time to circumcise the child; and he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb” (2:21).

In the Matthew narrative we receive a clue as to the meaning of Jesus’ name: “. . . he will save his people from their sins.” The name Jesus in Greek is the same as the Hebrew name Joshua, which means “God saves” or “God’s salvation.” Luke does not give us the meaning of the name *Jesus* but includes other names that suggest

who he will become, “Son of the Most High” (1:32) and “to you is born . . . a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord” (2:11). Also in Luke we read that after the babe Jesus was presented to him Simeon proclaimed, “for my eyes have seen your salvation” (2:30).

As we consider these passages we are mindful that Matthew and Luke were written several decades after the events. The writers give testimony to what they understand and believe to be the essence of the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. They are not writing eyewitness accounts but are writing from a faith perspective as those who believe that the promises of God in the writings of the prophets are fulfilled in the risen Jesus, who is Savior, Messiah, and Lord.

According to Vincent Taylor, “In the first century the name [Jesus] was by no means uncommon. Josephus mentions about twenty persons so named. A striking change, however, is manifest from the second century onwards . . . the name was abandoned by Jews by reason of antagonism to Christianity, and was avoided by Christians from motives of reverence.”¹ Even today we seldom encounter persons who bear the name *Jesus*, except among some Latin American cultures.

Jesus in the New Testament

In the New Testament, the name *Jesus* appears 999 times in 960 verses. As you might expect, the name appears most often in the four Gospels: 642 times in 623 verses. The writers employ this common name throughout the Gospels and Acts to describe the actions of the man, Jesus, or to identify the words he spoke. It appears the Gospel writers, as well as the authors of the other New Testament books, use the name *Jesus* alone when describing or emphasizing his humanity.

There are many examples where the name *Jesus* is accompanied by other names to underscore his divine nature as the One who is God incarnate. In the New Testament we find *Jesus Christ* in 135 verses and *Christ Jesus* in 82 verses, for a total of 217 verses, where the word *Christ* is associated with *Jesus*. *Jesus Christ* appears only three times in the Gospels (Mark 1:1, John 1:17, 17:3). However, there are 51 verses where the word *Messiah* is used in the Gospels in reference to Jesus. In each instance, in the NRSV, there is a footnote that reads “or Christ.” *Christ* is the Greek word that translates the Hebrew word *Messiah*. We will focus more specifically on the names *Christ* and *Messiah* in session 4.



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Jesus in the Gospel of Mark

We would need an extended period of time to look at all of the *Jesus* references in even one Gospel, let alone all four. In order to explore the name *Jesus* we will focus on Mark, the shortest and earliest of the Gospels, limiting our focus to several representative passages that introduce us to Jesus as an extraordinary servant of God.

The Beginning of Jesus' Ministry (1:1–2:28)

After an opening introduction of thirteen verses, Mark launches into Jesus' ministry with the words, “Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God . . .” (1:14). The good news is, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news” (1:15). In the first two chapters Jesus calls Peter, Andrew, James, John (1:16, 19), and Levi (2:14) to join him in his mission of healing and proclaiming the good news. Later, seven more men are named among the twelve disciples (3:18, 19). Jesus responds to people's needs with four healings: a man with an unclean spirit, Simon's mother-in-law, a leper, and a paralytic. In addition, questions are raised by the religious authorities regarding Jesus eating with sinners and tax collectors, fasting, and keeping the Sabbath.

Reactions to Jesus vary. Those whom he calls respond quickly to his invitation. Those in need of healing are made well. Those with questions are challenged. Jesus was unlike anyone the people had ever met. Mark reports, “His fame . . . spread throughout . . . Galilee” (1:28), “people came to him from every quarter” (1:45), “they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, ‘We have never seen anything like this’” (2:12), and “The Pharisees went out and immediately conspired with the Herodians against him, how to destroy him” (3:6).

From the beginning of his ministry Jesus aroused much interest in response to his actions, his teachings, and

his answers to questions. No one was neutral. People responded to him with either devotion or disdain.

It is not difficult to “translate” these first-century responses to Jesus into a contemporary context. Surely Jesus’ fame has spread wide across our land. We have been exposed to many who speak in Jesus’ name or about him. We read the good news of his ministry of teaching, healing, and challenging. How do we respond to this message and Jesus’ invitation to join him in his mission? How does Jesus call persons to follow him today? What are our infirmities and limitations for which we need healing and restoration to wholeness? What questions do we bring to Jesus or have about him?

Jesus with His Disciples (4:35–41)

Jesus and the disciples were in a boat in the midst of a violent storm. In this brief narrative we see two things that give clues as to the relationship between Jesus and his disciples. First, Jesus criticizes the disciples for their lack of faith, “Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?” (4:40). Second, the disciples do not fully understand who Jesus is, “‘Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?’” (4:41). The disciples wonder who this man is but they must have sensed that he could do something when they admonished him, “Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?” (4:38). This dual theme appears several times in Mark: the disciples do not understand the nature of the man they left their nets to follow, and Jesus challenges his followers to have faith, to believe that God is at work in their midst.

This passage invites us to reflect on our relationship with Jesus. If we have read about his miraculous works, heard sermons calling us to have faith, and studied Jesus’ teachings, what is our response? What is our understanding of and belief in Jesus of Nazareth? What are the dangerous or challenging moments that cause us to cry out for help as the disciples did? What is the nature of our plea to God in times of crisis? When God does rescue us from peril? Do we wonder, as the disciples did, who this is that saves us? Might we also be chided for being so afraid and having such little faith?

Jesus in His Hometown (6:1–6)

Jesus returned to his hometown of Nazareth and on the Sabbath went to the synagogue, where he taught the people. Prior to returning to Nazareth, Mark reports in chapters 1 to 5 that Jesus performed ten miracles and



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taught his followers with several parables. The gathered believers in the synagogue “were astounded.” They questioned the source of his “wisdom” and “deeds of power.” After all, he was a familiar member of the community, “Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary and brother of . . . ?” (6:3). Matthew 13:54–58 parallels Mark’s account, also placing the event later in Jesus’ ministry, after people had witnessed his miracles and heard his teachings.

Luke’s account of the event is quite different (4:16–30), and takes place at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus is in the synagogue on the Sabbath, reading and commenting on a passage from the prophet Isaiah. In all three accounts the people are impressed with his teaching. Matthew and Mark report that the people “took offense at him,” that Jesus was unable to do “any deeds of power,” and that Jesus “was amazed at their unbelief.” In Luke, “All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth” (4:22). Jesus declared that he was the fulfillment of the prophet’s words and reminded them of two accounts of the prophets Elijah and Elisha reaching out to marginal, unacceptable persons who were blessed by God. After this surprising, outrageous declaration of God’s mercy, the people of Nazareth are determined to kill Jesus, but he moves through the hostile crowd untouched.

Those who knew him best were unable to recognize who he was, God’s spirit-filled servant seeking to establish a new reign of peace, justice, and love for all. Jesus “could do no deed of power there, except that he laid his hands on a few sick people and cured them” (Mark 6:5).

It is easy to believe in Jesus who speaks truthful words and does powerful deeds, as long as he does not disturb or question our treasured beliefs and accustomed behaviors. How open are we to receive God’s abundant grace and to hear challenging words that call us to a new reality in God’s reign? Is it not true that it is difficult to accept the authority of and believe in someone we know

well? Imagine a congregation full of pride for a youth who speaks at their Youth Sunday service. Later, the youth returns as a young adult to the neighborhood and church after college and graduate school. She suggests something to the church that runs counter to the way “we have always done it.” The pride that was shown on Youth Sunday becomes distrust and disbelief.

Jesus and the Children (9:33–37 and 10:13–16)

The disciples accompany Jesus throughout Galilee. They often have difficulty understanding his teaching. They are in awe of his marvelous works. But they are confused by his words when he says he is to suffer and die. They arrive in Capernaum, a village by the Sea of Galilee which is Peter’s hometown and home base for Jesus. The disciples argue as to who among them is the greatest. “[Jesus] sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, ‘Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all.’ Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me’” (9:35–37). The disciples are again reminded that their values and practices are not consistent with what Jesus expects.

The second passage (10:13–16) is another example of the disciples misunderstanding Jesus’ mission. It is not surprising that they would want to protect Jesus in the midst of the crowds where everyone pressed in upon him seeking a blessing. It is also not surprising that parents would desire for their children to receive a blessing from the touch of Jesus. These competing motives result

in a confrontation where the disciples prevent parents from bringing their children to Jesus. Can you visualize the scene? Jesus sees what is happening and rebukes the disciples, “Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs” (v. 14).

Jesus is so consistent. He welcomes the lowly and reaches out to the marginalized: the children, tax collectors, fishermen, women, lepers, sinners, and people with evil spirits.

Conclusion

What can we learn from the actions and words of Jesus? Clearly, he is a complex, mysterious person who challenges us to the core of our usual ways of thinking, believing, and behaving. He invites us to join with him in his ministry of healing and teaching, of reaching out to the least, and he wants us to be open to new ways of understanding the good news.

About the Writer

Donald L. Griggs is a retired Presbyterian pastor-educator specializing in Christian education as a pastor, professor, writer, editor, and consultant. He has authored numerous books, including The Bible from Scratch: The Old Testament for Beginners; The Bible from Scratch: The New Testament for Beginners; Teaching Today’s Teachers to Teach: Basic Skills for Church Teachers; and Christian Education in the Small Church, coauthored with Judy McKay Walther. Don lives in Livermore, California.

Endnote

1. Vincent Taylor, *The Names of Jesus* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1953), 5.

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Sunday: Philippians 2:1–11

What does it mean that God gave Jesus the name above every name? Pray to God in the name of Jesus, expressing your faith and trust in him as Lord.

Monday: Matthew 1:18–25 and Luke 1:26–38

Imagine yourself in Joseph's or Mary's place. What are some thoughts and emotions you might have had? Pray that you might be as faithful as Joseph and Mary when you are surprised by a message from God.

Tuesday: Mark 2:1–12

Read this narrative from three perspectives: the crowd's, the disciples', and the scribes'. What do you think of Jesus from each perspective? Pray for wisdom to understand Jesus from your perspective today.

Wednesday: Mark 4:35–41

What are the perils you face? Pray to God to "still the storms" of your life.

Thursday: Mark 6:1–6 and Luke 4:16–30

Consider times when you lacked faith to believe that Jesus had the power to transform your life. Pray to God that you will be open to receive the good news Jesus offers.

Friday: Mark 9:33–37 and 10:13–16

Who are the ones who have been overlooked or put down because of their status? Pray for an open, welcoming spirit that you may reach out to others who are the least or the forgotten.

Saturday: Mark 10:17–31

What is it that prevents you from receiving what Jesus offers? Pray that your priorities will be ordered according to what Jesus expects.