

Devotion Guide for April 4, 2020

Read: Matthew 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19

Pray for God's illumination

As we move into Holy Week, the week between the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into Jerusalem and Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection, we are going to shift to a different format. This is a week filled with significant events in the life of Jesus. Exactly how each day of the week developed is debated. Even the actual day of the crucifixion is questionable. Traditionally, the Church has recognized Friday (Good Friday), but there is good reason to doubt the accuracy of this being the actual day. Others hold to Thursday and some to Wednesday as being the precise day. In one sense, it does not matter which day Jesus was crucified, but we will look at some of the reasons for the differing opinions. In this study, I am developing it around a Thursday crucifixion.

As we go through the week ahead, we will need to look at rather large sections of Scripture to show the events of each day. Thus, I will only be able to comment on several short passages each day, but I encourage you to read through the whole section of Scripture for each day. For us today, the day before the Triumphal entry, I want us to look back at three passages dealing with Jesus predicting His resurrection. We mentioned these in our study on April 1.

Matthew 16:21	Matthew 17:22-23	Matthew 20:17-19
He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes	The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men,	the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes,
be killed	they will kill Him	they will condemn Him to death and deliver Him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified
and on the third day be raised	and He will be raised on the third day	He will be raised on the third day

There are several points that we need to recognize in these three accounts. They are not only parallel, but also consistent. They show the absolute plan and control of God over the whole matter, It was a planned week, by God which was planned long ago in the covenant of redemption which was formulated within the Trinity before creation. Not in the first set of boxes the verb "deliver." There is no question about what is going to happen. Then in the second group, we see the outcome: to be killed. As Jesus Himself said, He came to give His life (Mark 10:45). And then in the last row, we see the final action, "be raised." He is to be raised from the dead by God the Father (Acts 2:24).

All of this is to His glory and because of His plan carried through, we are to give praise. It is the basis of our salvation and our faith.

Pray: That God would walk each of us through this week, each day opening our eyes more and more to His love for us, His grace to us, and the value of our salvation.

Devotion Guide for April 5, 2020

Read: Matthew 21:1-17 The Triumphal Entry

Pray for God's illumination

Palm Sunday is one of the most recognized Sundays of the year. The celebration of Jesus entering Jerusalem being hailed as the Messiah. The waving of the palm branches (hosannas) and the proclamation, "Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!" create a drama we love to reenact in the Church. Truly it is the focal point of the day, but it is not all that happened.

After entering into the city, we are told that Jesus entered the temple. At this point, we find a slight difference in the Gospel accounts concerning Jesus' driving the money changers out of the temple. John describes the event as happening early in Jesus' ministry (some believe that it happened twice), whereas Mark puts it on the day after the triumphal entry. Both Luke and Matthew have it taking place on Palm Sunday after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem. This is one of those places that we need to be careful that we do not get hung up on the particulars and miss the main point of the event. The reason for Jesus taking this action in the temple was to show us the passion He has to protect the house of God. There is nothing wrong with the selling and buying of sheep for the sacrifice. As a matter of fact, that was a necessity since people had traveled for days or even weeks to come to Jerusalem for the Feast of Unleavened Bread which for seven days followed Passover. Typically, they would not bring their sheep on such a journey, but carry money with them for the purpose of purchasing an appropriate animal to be offered as a sacrifice to God. Jesus was not troubled by the people purchasing lambs for the sacrifice, but about the selling of these animals taking place in the outer court of the temple the Court of the Gentiles. There were markets nearby, outside the temple precinct, to serve this purpose. Whereas also, some records indicate that there was "price gauging" going on, Jesus's emphasis was on the use of the temple, "My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you make it a den of robbers." Mark's account helps us understand this statement by adding "a house of prayer for all the nations" (Mark 11:17). This comment shows us that "prayer" is here being used as a synonym for worship.

"We call this event "the cleansing of the temple" but that phrase understates the significance of Jesus' action. Through this decisive action, Jesus was asserting authority over the center of Israel's religion and identity.... As Israel's great high priest, He oversees the proper use of the temple, its worship and its sacrifice" (Daniel M. Doriani). Jesus shut down the temple for this improper function and in so doing reopened the temple for the neediest people as verse 14 indicates, "and the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple, and He healed them."

Does Jesus have the authority to take such action. As He will soon say, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me" (Matthew 28:18). This is evidenced in our text as we see the chief priests and scribes, not challenging Him on authority, but get upset with the proclamation of the people acclaiming Jesus as the Messiah, the specially anointed one from God. All of creation is to praise Him (Psalm 148:1-6) — that includes you and me!

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 6, 2020

Read: Matthew 21:18-24:31

Pray for God's illumination

Jesus and His disciples had retreated to Bethany for the night. They would do this each evening until His arrest. Most likely they stayed at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha. Bethany was a great location, only about two miles from Jerusalem on the eastern slope of the Mt. of Olives.

As Jesus and His disciples arrived in Jerusalem, they went back to the temple where Jesus spent much of the day teaching and in controversial conversation with the Jewish leaders. This is where we get His parables about the two sons (21:28-32), the tenants (21:33-46), and the wedding feast (22:1-14). His discussions with the religious leaders included the source of His authority, the resurrection, which is the greatest commandment, and the lineage of the Messiah. This is also where we have Jesus' rather lengthy description about the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as the coming age (chapter 24). There are a number of viewpoints on this section, but we will have to leave it for another day.

Today, I want to focus on a strange event that happened on the way into Jerusalem. Matthew tells us that Jesus was hungry and saw a fig tree in foliage, but it did not have the early fruit on it which one would have expected. This became one of those "teaching moments" for Him. Jesus curses the tree and it immediately withered. His disciples were amazed about this. They asked Him, not about why He cursed the tree, but how did it wither so quickly?

Jesus answers their question about where His authority comes from - faith. Strange, what does faith have to do with the cursing of a fig tree? Note carefully Jesus' explanation:

Truly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, 'Be taken up and thrown into the sea,' it will happen. And whatever you ask in prayer, you will receive, if you have faith. (21:21-22)

The explanation is not about moving a mountain, but about moving **this mountain**. That phrase is used three times and in all three refers to a specific mountain: Mark 17:20 = the mount of Transfiguration; John 4:21 = Mt Gerazim. Here the mountain is the temple mount. He is not talking about moving it physically, but spiritually. In Matthew 24:32-35, Jesus explains that this cursing refers to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. We are looking at Jesus telling us about the destruction of Judaism as it existed in His day. It was like the fig tree in foliage but with no fruit- all show. True faith in God would move it, replace it. Because the religion of Judaism was rejecting the Messiah, for which they had been looking for hundreds of years, it would be removed as the people of God and replaced by those who have true faith.

This teaching is also summarized by Jesus' comments about paying taxes to Caesar (22:15-22). Caesar gets what is his - tax revenue; while God gets what is His - the hearts of those who truly believe in Him.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 7, 2020

Read: Matthew 24:32-26:16

Pray for God's illumination

We now move to Tuesday, Jesus and His disciples are returning to Jerusalem from a night in Bethany. On the way, they encounter the withered fig tree (24:32-41). Another teaching moment for Jesus as He explains that the tree represents the judgment of God against the Jewish faith of His day. He goes on to say that this judgment is immanent (within this generation). The understanding of the time is not clear as evidenced by two facts. First, there are many theories which have been with us for two thousand years. But more important is that Jesus teaches that no one knows the exact time, "concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only" (24:38). Jesus then follows this with two parables teaching how we are to spend the time waiting and watching for the return of the Messiah (25:1-30). The return will be followed by the great judgment. Jesus describes the judgment scene as a courtroom in which the judge separates the saved and the unsaved. He then proceeds to explain the reason for the verdict on each group. In both cases, it is based upon their works performed in this life. This may seem strange in light of the Gospel message which says that no one is saved by their works of righteousness (Titus 3:4-7), coupled with Revelation 20:12 which says that all mankind will be judged by what they have done. Though this at first sounds contradictory, both are absolutely true. The price for sin is death (Romans 6:23), and since God cannot overlook sin or forgive the guilty (Nahum 1:3), the price must be paid! Yet for the believer, the price of his sins are paid for him by Christ who takes upon Himself the sins of all believe (Isaiah 53:4-6).

This upcoming event of Jesus' sacrifice is commemorated by an event that takes place at the home of Simon the leper in Bethany. Matthew simply tells us that a woman came with a flask of expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus (26:6-13). The Gospel of John goes into much more detail about this event (John 12:1-8). As we combine the two accounts we learn that this was also the home of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. This probably means that Simon was their father. John also identifies the woman as Mary, the perfume was pure nard worth three hundred denarii (a denari was a year's wages), and Judas was the one who voiced his objection. The Mary is the sister of Lazarus and Martha while the nard probably represented their life's savings. Thus it was a very costly action. The difference in whether she poured the perfume on Jesus' head or His feet is not as significant as the humility evidenced by her drying Him with her hair. Jesus responds to the event and the criticism with a remarkable prophecy:

In pouring this ointment on My body, she has done it to prepare Me for burial.

Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. (26:12-13)

Yes, this remains true about Mary as this expression of her love and devotion are recorded in the Bible, but even more, it is also remembered for the fact that it represents the humble approach that every Christian must take in coming to faith in Jesus. Perhaps, this also was a catalyst for Judas' decision.

We do not know what the thinking process of Judas actually was, but this one who had been a follower of Jesus and participant in all the miracles and blessings of His ministry, decides to turn Him over to the chief priests (26:14-16). He betrays Jesus for a price that is about one tenth of the value of the perfume Mary poured on Jesus (thirty pieces of silver).

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 8, 2020

Read: Matthew 26:17-26:56

Pray for God's illumination

According to our approach with the crucifixion being on Thursday, today becomes the day of preparation. That means that it is first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread which in the Jewish calendar makes it the 14th day of Nisan. In the Jewish tradition, Nisan is the first month making Passover happen at the beginning of the new year.

As we saw yesterday, Judas has agreed to turn Jesus over to the Jewish authorities who are seeking a way to kill Him. It will not take long for that opportunity for Judas to activate his plan. One thing that needs to be noted, Judas initiates the plan (Matthew 26:14).

Being the day of preparation for the Passover, Jesus gives His disciples specific instructions for where to prepare the meal (26:17-19). An important point to see in this and the next few sections of Scripture is how many times Jesus tells the disciples specific events that are going to take place. Jesus is not going into the crucifixion without a full knowledge of exactly where everything is leading - all according to "the plan." Information about the upper room (26:18), His betrayal (26:21), Peter's denying of Him (26:34), all the disciples deserting Him (26:31), all of these are clearly foretold.

The Jews count a new day starting at 6:00 pm, sundown. Consequently, the Passover began after sundown on that day. This is when Jesus celebrated the supper with His disciples and initiated the Lord's Supper. Whereas, Passover was a memorial service, remembering God's deliverance of His people from Egypt under the leadership of Moses, the Lord's Supper is far more. It has its memorial aspect (Luke 22:20), but Matthew focuses on the redemptive nature and future component of the Supper, "this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28) and "I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (26:29).

Following the Supper, Jesus and His disciples move from the upper room in Jerusalem through the East Gate, across the Kidron Valley, and up the Mt. Of Olives. Those who are involved in the Ezekiel study on Wednesdays will recognize this as the same route that God takes in Ezekiel's vision of God leaving Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian Captivity. Both of these events are making the same statement: God is leaving Jerusalem as the destruction of the city is soon to come. In the Garden of Gethsemane which is located on the Mt. Of Olives, Jesus prays to the Father about the upcoming events which will lead to His crucifixion. It is also here in this garden that Judas will carry out his diabolical deed, and Jesus is arrested.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 9, 2020

Read: Matthew 26:57-27:66

Pray for God's illumination

Thursday is the day of the crucifixion in the approach to Holy Week which I am using in this study. When arrested, Jesus did not resist the arrest, and He even rebuked His disciples for their efforts to fight against the arresters (26:51-53).

We first find Jesus appearing before the Chief Priest Caiaphas and the Jewish council, the Sanhedrin, and then on to Pilate. [John adds a visit to Herod also.] A lot has been written about the abnormalities of "the trials," but let's just focus on one aspect the events of that morning. It was not a trial for justice, but one for conviction, "now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death" (26:59). Even after wading through numerous false witnesses, the council finally found two witnesses who substantiated their claim that Jesus was a blasphemer (26:59-66). This was what they were looking for, but it was not enough to get the conviction they wanted. To make charges to the Roman government, they would have to come up with something against the government.

The Council brought Jesus before Pilate with 3 charges. They knew that their real concern was blasphemy, but blasphemy would mean nothing to Pilate. They needed some violation that would be seen as an attack on the Roman governmental control. According to Luke's account the 3 charges were: "We found this Man misleading our nation and forbidding us to give tribute to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a king" (Luke 23:2). It is the charge of being a king that caught Pilate's attention. He asks Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?" (27:11). When Jesus would give no answer by which Pilate could condemn Him, Pilate decided to release Jesus using his annual practice of releasing one prisoner at this festival. But the people demanded Barabbas be released instead of Jesus. We are told that this was because the Jewish leaders stirred up the crowd to this end (27:20). Remember, this was their sole purpose - to have Jesus put to death! Because it looked like the people were getting ready to riot, Pilate gives in to the demands and turns Jesus over to be ridiculed, beaten, and crucified.

We do not know exactly when Jesus was placed on the cross, but we do know that from noon until 3:00 pm God caused darkness to cover all the land. This truly was the darkest day in human history - the day the Son of God is killed.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of Jesus and with limited preparations, buried the body in Joseph's tomb. The limited preparation of the body was due to the late hour, it was almost 6:00 pm, the beginning of the Sabbath Day. Burial of the dead was forbidden on a Sabbath.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 10, 2020

Read: Exodus 13:3-16 Matthew 26:17 Exodus 12 (Passover)

Pray for God's illumination

What day is it? How many times have we asked that question? Especially the last several weeks with our normal life-cycle changed due to the Chinese Virus, keeping up with the days has been more difficult. Since we do not know exactly what year Jesus was born and thus exactly when He was crucified, knowing which day the Passover fell that year is impossible. Passover changes from year to year (like our Easter) because it is based upon the cycles of the moon. Passover was considered a Sabbath by the Jews. They had their weekly Sabbath (Friday from 6:00 pm until Saturday at 6:00 pm) and they had their annual Sabbaths (special religious holidays).

Traditionally, the Church has held to Friday as being the day of crucifixion. No one seems to know exactly when or where the Friday tradition began. Yet, the tradition has not been without its opposition as some have tried to understand the three days and nights in the tomb. It has been taught that any portion of a day counts - thus Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. But that does not explain the three nights. I have no aspirations to change the traditions of the Church or any illusions that it even would be possible. I only present the that Thursday is the day of the crucifixion as a way to better understand the week. And with that being said, there are also a number of Christians who hold to a Wednesday crucifixion day.

The breakdown of the days for the Wednesday crucifixion goes like this. All the events normally associated with Good Friday happened on Wednesday. Thursday was the annual Sabbath of Passover. Then Friday was the day of preparation for the weekly Sabbath. It was on this day that the women purchased the spices and made preparations to go as soon as the Sabbath was over to take care of the body of Jesus. Saturday was the weekly Sabbath with no activity. This means that you have three days in the tomb: Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. The three nights would be Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. By this theory, Jesus would have actually risen on Saturday evening and then the women would have found the empty tomb on Sunday morning.

Whichever theory you may prefer does not matter as long as you hold to the truth that Jesus really was crucified, buried, and then God raised Him from the dead.

We still recognize Passover as a mighty act of God which He performed to preserve His people. We do not in the Christian Church celebrate the day because we have a new Passover. In the Old Testament Passover, the death angel passed over the homes where the lamb's blood was spread on the door frame. It was pointing ahead to the true Passover where the blood of the Lamb of God would not be spread upon the door frame but poured out at the cross of Calvary to save sinners from their sin.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 11, 2020

Read: Mark 2:23-28 Exodus 20:8-11 Isaiah 58:13-14

Pray for God's illumination

The weekly Sabbath has its origin in creation: "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy" (Exodus 20:11). In creation, no instructions are given in our observing the Sabbath, only that God created it and rested on that day. However, in the Ten Commandments, God gives us some specific instruction concerning our remembering the day. First, we are told that it is holy (Exodus 20:8). That means that it is set apart as different from the other 6 days. This difference is shown in the change in our work. God has given us a 6/1 ratio to follow (Exodus 20:9-10). Also, we are told that this difference is to be manifested in that the day is to be the Lord's (Exodus 20:10). Deuteronomy adds to our observance of the Sabbath the fact that we are to remember God's deliverance from Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). And then Isaiah adds instruction and a blessing to the observance; "you shall take delight in the Lord, and I will make you ride on the heights of the earth" (Isaiah 58:14a).

Second, in the New Testament, Jesus had many encounters with the Pharisees over the Sabbath. They took a legalistic view of observing the day with all their rules and regulations. It seemed He was constantly violating their rules, but He never "broke" the Sabbath. He proclaimed that He was Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28) and that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). Isaiah further warned us that the Sabbath is not simply a day to do whatever we want to do: "if you honor it, not going your own ways, or seeking your own pleasure ... then you shall take delight in the Lord" (Isaiah 58:13b-14a).

Thirdly, we note that the Sabbath for the Church was changed from Saturday to Sunday in commemoration of the resurrection. Instead of being the rest after six days of labor, the "Christian Sabbath" becomes a symbol of new life - the beginning of a new week.

When we try to understand and apply the teachings of Scripture concerning the Sabbath, there are several facts we need to keep in mind. Unfortunately, the Westminster Shorter Catechism does not help us much as it tends to take more of the legalistic perspective reflective of much of the controversy within the church of that day. Yes, the Sabbath teaching does have its particular "do's and don't's," both Isaiah and Jesus warn us to not let that drive our application of it in our lives. Isaiah emphasizes the delight part of our obedience to the commandment (Isaiah 58:13 & 14). Legalism is never a delight, but a burden under which we cannot stand for long. Jesus teaches us that the day was created for man [to enjoy]. And when we look at how Jesus and His disciples observed the Sabbath, we see consistent deviations from the legalistic rules of the Jewish teaching of that day. It is a day set apart from the rest of the week to be a day of worship of God. We are to delight in the fact that God has given us this break from our labor to spend the time with Him and delighting in Him.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.

Devotion Guide for April 12, 2020

Read: Matthew 28:1-20

The Resurrection and Following

Pray for God's illumination

We have trekked our way from Galilee, the Mount of Transfiguration, down the east bank of the Jordan, crossing at Jericho and moving into the Jerusalem. We have heard Jesus teach, watched Him perform miracles, and witnessed both His reception and rejection in the city. Our journey ended when Jesus was taken and crucified, three days ago. But that is not the end of the story. "God raised Him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it" (Acts 2:24).

We start the day with a group of women coming to the tomb to finish the burial process of anointing the body (Mark 16:1). Some people get concerned with the difference in the four Gospels at this point: John mentions only Mary Magdalene (20:1); Matthew names Mary Magdalene and the other Mary (28:1); where Mark identifies the other Mary as the mother of James and adds Salome (16:1); while Luke names Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women (24:10). Each Gospel has their different emphasis which dictates who they include in their account. But the take away with this is that it is not about the women. It is not about the disciples. It is not even about the empty tomb. The EMPHASIS is Jesus Christ risen!

Matthew continues his account by telling how the Jewish leaders tried to cover-up the resurrection by paying the guards to say that His disciples stole the body (28:11-15).

There were many recorded appearances of Jesus to His followers that are recorded by the Gospel writers, but not Matthew. I have listed these for extra reading and for your pleasure.

Mark 16:12-13 — two men walking

Luke 24:13-35 — two disciples on the road to Emmaus

Luke 24:36-50 — the disciples in the upper room

John 20:24-29 — the disciples with Thomas

John 21:1-14 — seven disciples beside the sea

But Matthew moves right to the end of Jesus' time here on earth. As noted earlier, we started our journey in Galilee with Jesus meeting with Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. We could have actually backed up to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus which began in Galilee.

Now when He heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee. And leaving Nazareth He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

“‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,
the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death,
on them a light has dawned.’

From that time Jesus began to preach, saying,

‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’”

(Matthew 4:12-17)

It is in Galilee that Matthew concludes His account of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (28:16-20). Jesus ends where He begins. It reminds us of our life and ministry — in both we end where we begin. “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord (Job 1:21). More importantly, in ministry (our Christian walk with God), we begin totally dependent upon God and end trusting in Him for eternity. There is no other way to become a Christian other than humbly receiving God’s free gift of His Son Jesus Christ. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). We must end the same way — trusting Jesus. “I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given in Christ Jesus ... as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (I Corinthians 1:4,7,8).

Jesus ends in Galilee. He acknowledged that His earthly work ministry was completed, “It is finished” (John 19:30). He had told His disciples that He was getting ready to leave, “I am going to the Father” (John 14:12); but when He leaves, He will send the Holy Spirit, “And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you (John 14:16-17). Then He makes His final appearance to them in Galilee where He gives His authority to the believers to continue the ministry, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20). He ascended to the Father, but the work of Christ continues through the Body of Christ, the Church. We are called to be a part of building the Kingdom by making disciples.

Disciple-making is more than evangelism - witnessing and leading people to salvation. It is more than Christian education - teaching the information about Jesus. It is more than increasing in our faith - spiritual growth. It is more than worship - praising God for who He is and what He has done. Making disciples is building the Kingdom. Jesus said that He was building His Church (Matthew 16:18) [Church and Kingdom are interchangeable at this point]. Building the Kingdom is doing all the things listed above, but more. It is doing them all in the power of Christ. It is recognizing the reality of the promise, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). It is seeing this reality played out in our lives as we live trusting in Him for wisdom and guidance. It is being actively involved in the life and ministry of Jesus Christ through His Church.

Pray about the lesson, for our country and church.