



Sunday Morning Grow Groups

March 17, 2024

Lent 5

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Holy Week Schedule:
 - Sunday, March 24, Palm Sunday and KidsConnect Easter Celebration
 - Thursday, March 28, Maundy Thursday, 7 pm worship
 - Friday, March 29, Good Friday, 12 pm and 7 pm worship
- Sunday, March 31, Easter, 8:30 am and 10:45 am worship
 - No GROW groups

SHARING AND CONNECTING

What is your favorite jellybean flavor?

THEME FOR THE WEEK –

Throughout our readings we hear the invitation for forgiveness and the mystery of the cross. Reflect how they are intricately tied as you read the passages.

READINGS

Hebrew Reading - Jeremiah 31:31-34

The Judeans in Babylon blamed their exile on their ancestors, who had broken the covenant established at Sinai. Here the prophet looks to a day when God will make a new covenant with the people. There will be no need to teach the law because God will write it on their hearts.

³¹The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. ³²It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

Questions for Conversation and Reflection:

1. *Jeremiah 31 presents a vision of a people who have God's teachings written "on their hearts". What does that mean for us today?*

New Testament Reading – Hebrews 5:5-10

Using priestly imagery and references to the Old Testament, the author explains how Christ lived in trusting obedience to God, and so God made Christ the source of our eternal salvation.

⁵Christ did not glorify himself in becoming a high priest, but was appointed by the one who said to him,

"You are my Son,
today I have begotten you";

⁶as he says also in another place,

"You are a priest forever,
according to the order of Melchizedek."

⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. ⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and having been made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him, ¹⁰having been designated by God a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

Questions for Conversation and Reflection:

1. *The book of Hebrews is an intellectually and symbolically complex sermon written in elegant Greek, probably around the time of the destruction of the temple in 70 CE. It encourages believers to remain faithful to the gospel despite any hardships they encounter. Melchizedek is remembered as blessing Abram and presenting him with bread and wine. Beginning with the author of Hebrews, this mysterious figure became important in Christian imagination. Who has played a role in your personal spiritual formation?*

Gospel Lesson – John 12:20-33

Jesus entered Jerusalem for the last time to celebrate the Passover festival. Here Jesus' words about seeds planted in the ground turn the disaster of his death into the promise of a harvest in which everyone will be gathered.

²⁰Now among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Greeks. ²¹They came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and said to him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." ²²Philip went and told Andrew; then Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. ²³Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. ²⁴Very truly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. ²⁵Those who love their life lose it, and those who hate their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶Whoever serves me must follow me, and where I am, there will my servant be

also. Whoever serves me, the Father will honor.

²⁷“Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say— ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour. ²⁸Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” ²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.” ³⁰Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not for mine. ³¹Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be driven out. ³²And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³He said this to indicate the kind of death he was to die.

Questions for Conversation and Reflection:

1. *In the gospel, Jesus plants the image of the (dead) seed coming to life and bearing fruit, as a metaphor for his own crucifixion and being “lifted up” on our behalf. The Greeks ask to see Jesus. We might paraphrase Jesus’ response this way: “If you want to see me, first look down into the dirt; then look up to the cross.” Reflect on a time when you struggled to see Jesus. How were you encouraged to ‘look up’ and ‘see’?*

QUICK REMINDER:

Identify a facilitator for next week’s GROW group. See you then!

CLOSING PRAYER:

(Offer any prayer requests to the group and pray with and for each other)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Cast me not away from your presence and take not your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of your salvation and sustain me with your bountiful Spirit.

Amen. (Ps. 51:10-12)