**I Love to Tell the Story**

Explore every story of Jesus in this year-long devotional guide. Go at your own pace using the online archive.

**Day 121: An Exorcism**

**Read: Mark 9:38-41,** Luke 9:49-50

Guided reflection:

The disciples found a man they did not know, who was speaking in the name of Jesus! They thought they had a corner on that market! After all, they followed Jesus and they were with him all the time, so this guy must be a fraud. Jesus gives a great line: “don’t say no to him. If he is for us at least he is not against us! God will honor him!” Have you ever thought that someone is not “of Christ” because they worship differently, or use different phrases but they call upon the name of God? Are there people in your life that you are excluding who are advancing the gospel - just in a different way? Could Jesus be calling His disciples to a more open mind?

Guided prayer:

*“O God, as United Methodists, we like to think we are a church that has open minds, open hearts,*

*and open doors. Loving God, are there people to whom I am not open, my heart is closed and I would like to slam a door in their face? Forgive me and help me to see that if they are FOR you, then they are not against us. Amen.”*

**Day 122: Temptations**

**Read: Matt 18: 6-9;** Mark 9: 42-48; Luke 17: 1-2

Guided reflection:

This passage is not about being tempted, but about being the one who is the source of someone else’s temptation. Not the drug user, but the drug pusher! Have you ever done anything that causes another to be tempted to do something that is wrong or hurtful? In your own life, is it your eye or foot that causes you to sin! Do something about it! Stop being a tempter! Make a list right now of ways you could actively be tempting another person. Maybe it’s leaving your computer open to young ones without safeguards or giving someone something that you know is not good for them. Go on, make your list. Jesus says here that it would be better to hang a weight around your neck and drown yourself rather than hurt one little one. What we do and say DOES affect others.

Guided Prayer:

*“Heavenly Father, could I be doing something that is causing another person to be in harms way by tempting them? Is there any part of me that keeps me on a merry-go-round of unhealthy patterns? Change my heart, O God, and may I be more like you. Amen.”*

**Day 123: The Lost sheep**

**Read:** Matthew 18: 10-14, **Luke 15: 3-7**

Guided reflection:

Luke 15 is the “lost and found” department of the gospels. A shepherd has 100 sheep and one gets lost so he searches and searches until he finds it. When he does, he lays it around his shoulders. I have heard that it means he broke its little leg so it would need to be held to be healed, and in the healing time it would become so close to the shepherd that it would never run away again. Have you lost your way? Are you hurting from the consequences? Could it be that this is the very time you can learn to know the very heart of the Good Shepherd – while exhausted from your wandering away from God. Do you know that there is a party in heaven when you choose to be found and learn from your

wandering ways? Jesus’ focus is always looking for those of us who are wandering off. You are the one that moves – not the Good Shepherd!

Guided Prayer:

*“Savior, be like a shepherd to me and lead me. Early, before I get to wandering away. Early, help me to seek your favor and to know your voice. You have loved me, even when I go astray and you love me still. Thanks be to God! Amen.”*

**Day 124 : Is it up to us to reprove another?**

**Read: Matt. 18:15-20;** Luke 17:3

Guided reflection:

Jesus is telling us how the church is to operate. When another believer has wronged you, Jesus does not expect you to sit and do nothing – Jesus gives you a four step process, with the fourth step being rather harsh! But, when we agree and gather in Christ’s name, wow! It becomes a holy moment! Christ is present! In a way, this passage makes it sound like we are to be accountable to each other so the church can keep the most important things most important! We are the church of today. When we can keep away from dissension and hurtful actions, we can focus on our task: To be in God’s presence!

Guided Prayer: Here is an evening prayer from my childhood – have you heard it? Prayed it?

*If I have wounded any soul today, If I have caused one foot to go astray, If I have walked in my own willfull way -Good Lord, forgive! If I have uttered idle words or vain, If I have turned aside from want or pain, Lest I myself should suffer through the strain -Good Lord, forgive! If I have craved for joys that are not mine, If I have let my wayward heart repine, Dwelling on things of earth, not things divine -Good Lord, forgive! If I have been perverse, or hard, or cold, If I have longed for shelter in Thy fold, When Thou has given me some part to hold - Good Lord, forgive. Forgive the sins I have confessed to Thee, Forgive the secret sins I do not see, That which I know not, Father, teach Thou me - Help me to live.*

**Day 125 : Reconciliation**

**Read: Matt 18: 21-22; Luke 17: 4**

Guided reflection:

Can’t you just hear the wheels turning in the heads of the disciples after day 124’s teaching? If someone has hurt me and I point it out to them and they ask me to forgive, just how many times do I have to do this forgiveness stuff? The goal is clean and healthy relationships, so just telling the other person they did me wrong is not the goal – forgiveness is! But Lord, how many times – as many as 7? Jesus says, not just 7, but 70 times 7. That is 490 times if you can multiply! Forgiveness is always to be given but Lynette adds her two cents – if you are in that kind of unhealthy cycle that keeps things going 490 times, you might want to figure out what is going on…just saying…

Guided prayer:

*“Forgiving and loving God, you forgive me even before I come to you with my repentance. But when it comes to others, especially those who seem to keep offending and hurting me, that is another matter. Help me to see that your desire is for me to be healed and not carry around hurt and pain… but my desire, sometimes, is to set them straight and get even! Lord, could you help my heart become more like yours? Amen”*