**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 176: Jesus’ riddle**

**Read: Matt: 22: 41-45; Mark 12:35-37a; Luke 20:41-44**

Guided reflection:

Jesus is really getting worked up over the Pharisees. As a matter of fact, today and tomorrow’s readings show Jesus putting the Pharisees in their place. We are just days away from the crucifixion and these readings add fuel to their fury at Jesus. Since Jesus knows He is the Messiah, he messes with their minds. How could David call the Messiah “Master” if he was really his son? It was a riddle – because Jesus, the Messiah, was born of Mary from the linage of David and is Lord of all – the living and the dead – so that includes David of old!

Remember the song ‘Mary, did you know that the child you deliver will deliver you?”

Guided prayer:

*“Open my eyes, Lord. My thoughts are not your thoughts, so free me from thinking that I can have all the answers. I place my trust in you. Amen”*

**Day 177: Jesus gives it to the Pharisees!**

**Read: Matt 23: 1-36; Mark `12:37b-40; Luke 20: 45-47**

Guided reflection:

The writer of Matthew gives the broadest account of this confrontation. I see at least seven times Jesus said “Woe to you… hypocrites, scribes and Pharisees, blind guides, vipers” Jesus really used the word *Hypocrites* because they stood in the way of others finding God; instead of setting people free, their converts become more bound up! They placed their trust in the physical altar in the temple; they strained at a gnat and ended up swallowing a camel; they worried about washing cups just right, but ignored what when into the cup; they were dead bones walking around in robes… he ended his diatribe with “You brood of vipers!” He called them snakes! No wonder they shouted “Crucify Him!” Have you ever been a hypocrite? Don’t read that real fast… take time to ask yourself, have you ever been a hypocrite?

Guided prayer:

*“Wow, Jesus, you really got going on those Pharisees! Are there places in my life where I am a hypocrite? Do I bind folks up with rules? Do I judge others on whether they do things the way I think they should be done? Forgive me, Lord. Amen”*

**Day 178: The widow’s gift**

**Read: Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21: 1-4**

Guided reflection:

I love this story! It lets me know that God knows my heart and my circumstance and realizes that even if I cannot give much, if I give what I have, God knows. Isn’t it good to know we do not have to be all puffed up nor make a big production about our gift giving to God. We just show up, just as we are, and give what we have. But also notice that even though she had

little, she still gave. Giving is part of making our heart match God’s heart. Even if we have very little, we still give because we want a heart like God’s!

Guided prayer:

*“Giving God, I want my heart to match your heart. In your eyes, am I more like the Pharisees who gave out of their abundance or am I like the widow, who gave out of her little? Make my little become much when placed in your hands. Amen”*

**Day 179: Prediction of the Destruction of the Temple**

**Read: Matt 24: 1-3; Mark 13:1-4; Luke 21:5-7**

Guided reflection:

Again, remember this is just days before the crucifixion. When Jesus leaves the temple on this day, he begins to speak as one who knows the future. Over the next few days we will look at Jesus’ predictions. Maybe he stood and looked at the building itself, in awe of its grandeur. But with his insight, he knew that it would soon be destroyed. This temple that everyone saw as their spiritual center was going to be destroyed. Would they be able to see that it was just a building and their real center – IN HIM – would rise again? In 70 AD it happened, and all that is left is the “wailing wall” where Jews from all over the world come and “wail” and wait for the rebuilding of the temple. Right now the “Dome of the Rock Mosque” sits on that sight – a fact that fuels the animosity between the Jews and the Palestinians today.

Guided prayer:

*“Your Word tells me that I am the temple of the Lord… that the Spirit dwells within me.*

*Because of Jesus, I need not fear destruction, because you are with me… you are within me… you are Immanuel, God with ME!” Amen”*

**Day 180:The Signs of the Times**

**Read: Matt 24: 4-8; Mark 13:5-8; Luke 21: 8-11**

Guided reflection:

This section is called the “synoptic Apocalypse” - the words of Jesus about the end of time. Even today we wonder about the same things – when will the end of time come? Are we living in the end times? It does seem that nation is against nation… there do seem to be famines and earthquakes. What kind of birth pangs are these? I chose to not live in fear. I do not know about the signs of the times, but I do know that Jesus is Lord and that God has the final say. Just hours after Jesus talked about this, he was hanging on the cross. Their world was about to fall apart. If it is time, it is time, and I cannot do anything about it. I can only live for Christ one day at a time.

Guided prayer:

*“O God, sometimes I wonder about all the wars and natural disasters that do not seem so natural… I wonder where you are in all of this. Help me to choose hope and love instead of fear. You are my rock, my strength, and my very present help in times of trouble. Thank you. Amen.”*