



LONG STORY SHORT

A Year through the Bible

Reflection Guide

Jesus' Ministry Begins Matthew; Mark; Luke; John

Exploring the Story, Chapter 23

While each of the four Gospels differs in its telling of Jesus' work, they agree that it is infused with a power unlike anything else. While recognizing the new thing that God is doing in Jesus, the Gospel writers continue to root the story of Jesus in the larger story of Scripture, frequently quoting from earlier parts of the Bible to show how Jesus is the long-awaited and surprising fulfillment of God's ancient promises.

MONDAY

Read: Matthew 3

Reflect: Jesus' ministry begins with his baptism by John in the Jordan River. At the moment Jesus emerges from the water, we get a glimpse of the fullness of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Imagine that the words of 3:17 are addressed to you personally. As you hear God say these words to you, what emotions arise in you? Why? If you increasingly lived your life based on your identity as God's dearly loved child who brings God great joy, how, if at all, would your life be different?

Respond: In prayer, take refuge and rest in your identity as God's dearly loved child who brings God great joy.

TUESDAY

Read: Matthew 4

Reflect: As Jesus begins his ministry, he begins to call disciples, those who will follow him closely and strive to imitate him in every way. When Jesus calls them to follow, they immediately drop everything to do so. Are you surprised by the first disciples' response to Jesus' call? Why or why not? What is your typical response when you discern that God is calling you to something that will require sacrifice and change? What resources does your Christian faith give you to answer God's call in the way these first disciples did?

Respond: In prayer, ask God for the courage to answer God's call faithfully.

WEDNESDAY

Read: Mark 1-3

Reflect: Mark's telling of Jesus' ministry is breathless in its pace. Just as soon as Jesus' ministry begins, people are conspiring to kill him. Based on what you have read, what do you think is so threatening about Jesus' ministry and message? As you read these

stories about Jesus' early ministry, what do you find most challenging and most comforting? Why?

Respond: In prayer, think about the ways that you resist and oppose Jesus' work. Resolve to work more closely with Jesus.

THURSDAY

Read: Luke 4

Reflect: In each of the stories of Jesus' temptation, it is clear that the Holy Spirit leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted. Are you surprised to read that God leads Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted? Why or why not? What difference does it make that Jesus understands the power of temptation and human weakness because he himself experienced it? How, if at all, might Jesus' experience in the wilderness change your ability to relate to him?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to meet you in your temptations because in Jesus Christ, God has experience the power of temptation.

FRIDAY

Read: Luke 8

Reflect: In this chapter of Luke, we see many of the characteristic features of Jesus' ministry: teaching using short stories called "parables," casting out demons, performing miracles, and healing the sick. Yet throughout this chapter people are confused about who Jesus is, and at the end of this chapter, Jesus orders the people to keep the girl's healing a secret. What is missing from the picture of Jesus we see thus far in the Gospels? What parts of Jesus' ministry do you find easiest to relate to? Which do you find hardest to understand? Why?

Respond: In prayer, thank God for all the ways you have seen the power of Jesus at work in your life.

SATURDAY

Read: John 1:19-2:25

Reflect: Twice in this story (1:39 & 1:46) Jesus gains followers with the simple invitation, "Come and see for yourself." People begin to trust in Jesus because they see the miraculous signs he performs. How, if at all, have you seen Jesus at work in the world and in your own life? How, if at all, do you invite others to come and see Jesus at work?

Respond: In prayer, ask God to help you recognize Jesus at work in your life and in the lives of those around you.

SUNDAY

Read: John 3-4

Reflect: Throughout this passage, Jesus talks about the power of faith to restore life and to give eternal life. Jesus talks about faith as fuel for doing God's will. Jesus is revealed as the one who has the power to give life to the world. How, if at all, have you experienced the life-giving power of faith in Jesus Christ? What, if anything, could you do to increasingly live your life connected to Jesus' life-giving power?

Respond: In worship this morning, praise God for the gift of new life in Jesus Christ.