



WEEKLY STUDY

WEEK 4

We are a half way through the season of Lent. As with any season, we may find it difficult to stay the course due to unexpected storms and trials we face. This week's message was a reminder that Jesus is constantly showing up in our suffering, and offers us a Way to focus on life instead of fear and death. May your times of study and prayer steady your sights on Jesus to find the meaning and purpose of your own suffering.

Peace of Christ,
Dr. Mark Youngman
Pastor of Discipleship

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from daily readings as well as the additional questions at the bottom of this guide. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Find a time each day to read the passage of scripture and follow the daily prayer prompt.

Lord, be near to all who are suffering today.

Help them and us to see Jesus in the midst of hardship.

Produce in us perseverance, character, and hope that can only come from Jesus Christ.

Amen.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: MATTHEW 14.22-33

Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. ²³ After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, ²⁴ and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it.

²⁵ *Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. ²⁶ When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.*

²⁷ *But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid."*

²⁸ *"Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water."*

²⁹ “Come,” he said.

Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. ³⁰ But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, “Lord, save me!”

³¹ Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. “You of little faith,” he said, “why did you doubt?”

³² And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. ³³ Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

- We don’t normally look for people walking on top of the water. It’s not what we’d expect. Yet Jesus showed up to the disciples in the most direct way, in a time when they were especially aware of their desperation. Jesus could have gone around to where the boat was headed, but he took the “impossible” route to reveal more about who he was and what he had come to do. **When have you had to suspend your understanding of what was possible because God wanted to intervene in your life?**
- *Jesus, I confess that I am not always full of faith. I’ve missed or doubted your presence on many occasions. Thank you for continuing to appear to me in my times of desperation. Amen.*

TUESDAY: LUKE 24.30-35

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. ³¹ Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. ³² They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

³³ They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together ³⁴ and saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon.” ³⁵ Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.

- Jesus had been walking and talking with these disciples for hours, but they did not recognize him until he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them. Who can blame them for missing Jesus when everything they had seen and heard told them that he was dead and buried? Resurrection is surprising. But it was in this familiar act of breaking bread that they saw him for who he was. The pattern of taking, thanking, breaking and giving was demonstrated for those who were in the upper room on the night before Jesus’ crucifixion. The familiar pattern and words helped to break through the belief barrier. Yet only after he disappeared did they have the perspective to say, “Our hearts were burning within us.” **When, in retrospect, did you know for sure that Jesus was with you?**
- *God, I am in awe of the fact that you would come to me. Walk with me and talk with me today. Show me your divine perspective on life and on death and I will proclaim the resurrected One! Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: JOHN 21.4-7

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

⁵ He called out to them, “Friends, haven’t you any fish?”

“No,” they answered.

⁶ He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

⁷ Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.

- In another surprising appearance, the risen Jesus called out to the disciples as they fished in the early morning. Again, he went unrecognized until he repeated a command which led to an abundant catch. The abundance seems to be what John noticed and caused him to proclaim, "It is the Lord!". **Do you have someone in your life who points out the presence of Jesus? Have you ever thrown caution to the wind in response to Jesus?**
- *Jesus, I imagine the sorrow felt by the disciples after your crucifixion. That must have been a low place. Help me to recognize your presence and those who point to your presence in difficult times. Amen.*

THURSDAY: 1 CORINTHIANS 15.3-8

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. ⁶ After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷ Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸ and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

- Jesus appeared to more than 500 people after his resurrection. Most of those people were in a season of disorienting suffering. They had been knocked back by the death of Jesus. It wasn't what they expected. Oftentimes our own suffering coincides with unmet expectations. We didn't expect the loss of a loved one. We didn't anticipate the financial crisis. We didn't see the relationship coming to an end. **When have you seen a season of widespread suffering and confusion? Where did God show up?**
- *God, thank you for your faithful gift of showing up. You appear to us when we need you, not just when we expect you to arrive. Fill me with the confidence of one who has witnessed your resurrection. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ROMANS 5.3-5

Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; ⁴ perseverance, character; and character, hope. ⁵ And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

- Pastor Jacob shared the teaching that our suffering is not without meaning and purpose. These words from Paul identify how that works. Our suffering (while not caused by God) can still have a purpose to produce the positive outcomes of perseverance, character, and hope. **Has your own suffering or the suffering of others ever taught you something about your life?**
- *God, fill me with the hope of eternal glory yet to come. Pour your Spirit into my heart today. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ISAIAH 43.1b-2

*"Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;
I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*

² *When you pass through the waters,*

*I will be with you;
and when you pass through the rivers,
they will not sweep over you.*

- The suffering we face today will not be our final defeat. Our enemy will not be victorious because we are moving on towards a glory that has not yet been seen. So a God who walks with us through the waters and mighty rivers will redeem us and our suffering. **Think of a time when you felt like the waters of suffering might sweep over you and pull you under. How does it feel to hear the promise from God, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you.”?**
- *Jesus, be my guide through the waters of this world. Remind me that I have already been redeemed by you. Amen.*

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

The following are examples of how to live and to stay alert when following a God who shows up to his children. Together, discuss how each of these are ways that God has or has not shown up to you.

Keep your eyes peeled for Jesus.

- Talk about a time when you were in a stormy season of life. Do you remember how a sense of desperation helped you to look for your Savior? How did he show up to you in that season?

Look for Jesus in unusual places.

- If we are looking for him at all times, we will see Jesus in surprising ways and times. Complete the sentence: “I wouldn’t expect to see Jesus in this place _____, so that’s precisely where I’ll look for him.”

Look for Jesus in a voice you recognize.

- Make a list of the voices you can recognize in a crowd. When has Jesus spoken to you through another familiar voice? Maybe the voice of a parent, spouse, or friend? Are you able to distinguish the voice of Jesus from others?