



A Guide for Spiritual Formation

Text for the Week: Matthew 24:1-35

Message for the Week: "Tuesday"

Sunday, March 26, 2023

Opening:

What is one low (a bad thing) and one high (a good thing) that happened to you this past week? Write them down and take turns sharing them with the others in your group.

Where have you seen the work of the Holy Spirit in your life this past week?

When was the last time you were deceived? How did it make you feel?

Preparation:

Spend 1-2 minutes in silence with God to center and prepare yourself for your time with God today.

Read:

Read / Have two people in your group read [Matthew 24:1-35](#) out loud. We are focusing in on verses 1-14.

[Clicking this link will bring you to multiple translations.]

As you read and/or listen to the text being read, circle, take note of, highlight, or underline what words, phrases, or ideas grabbed your attention and heart in these verses?

Write them down below and/or share them with those who are with you.

Respond / Reflect:

Who are we allowing to deceive us? How are we being deceived? Are we aware if/when we are being deceived?

Which prophets (religious, political, news, musicians, social media influencers and reels, etc.) are we listening to? Evaluate what these prophets say compared to what Jesus says. How are they the same? How are they different?

Why is the word of the Lord so essential for us being able to stand firm and not fall away?

Jesus says to us in this passage: "See to it that you are not alarmed." Jesus tells us the world is going to be a 'dumpster fire.' So...what are we going to do? How do we go about living a peaceful, non-anxious, and calm lives?

What "things" in our lives are we making the 'main thing' when they are not really the main thing? What is the 'main thing' for us as followers of Jesus?

Jesus warns us in these verses about the danger of our love for others growing cold. What does it look like for our love to grow cold? How do we avoid this from happening?

Try It:

Make a list of all the different people/prophets you are listening to each week.

What do you notice about each of their messages / what they are saying?

Prayer:

Spend time in prayer with/for the other people who are with you. Pray this prayer together:

Father, in this Lenten season, teach me not to be afraid. Let me hear, fresh and new, the voice of the Shepherd; to distinguish the loving truth of the gospel from so many messiahs wanting to be heard. Give me courage to walk the narrow path and to keep my eyes on eternity. AMEN

Missional/Spiritual Practice for March: Holy Curiosity for the Other

During the month of March, you are invited and encouraged to engage in the missional practice of [Holy Curiosity for the Other](#). By engaging in this practice, we seek to create safe and inviting space in meaningful conversation with others. This involves us risking new and deeper relationships with the people we meet in the context of their lives, developing a holy curiosity that transcends your own needs for affirmation or expression and calls you into full attentiveness and discovery of another person's life and story. When we provide safe, inviting, and prayerful space for another to share, transformative encounters with God and one another occur over time.

Matthew 24:1-35

(This week we are focusing in on verses 1-14)

New International Version

24 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. ² “Do you see all these things?” he asked. “Truly I tell you, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down.”

³ As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

⁴ Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.

⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved. ¹⁴ And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

¹⁵ “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’^[a] spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand—¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. ¹⁷ Let no one on the housetop go down to take anything out of the house. ¹⁸ Let no one in the field go back to get their cloak. ¹⁹ How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! ²⁰ Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. ²¹ For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again.

²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened. ²³ At that time if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here is the Messiah!’ or, ‘There he is!’ do not believe it. ²⁴ For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. ²⁵ See, I have told you ahead of time.

²⁶ “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. ²⁷ For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ²⁸ Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days
“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.”^[b]

³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth^[c] will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.^[d] ³¹ And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it^[e] is near, right at the door. ³⁴ Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

The Message

24 ¹⁻² Jesus then left the Temple. As he walked away, his disciples pointed out how very impressive the Temple architecture was. Jesus said, "You're not impressed by all this sheer *size*, are you? The truth of the matter is that there's not a stone in that building that is not going to end up in a pile of rubble."

³ Later as he was sitting on Mount Olives, his disciples approached and asked him, "Tell us, when are these things going to happen? What will be the sign of your coming, that the time's up?"

⁴⁻⁸ Jesus said, "Watch out for doomsday deceivers. Many leaders are going to show up with forged identities, claiming, 'I am Christ, the Messiah.' They will deceive a lot of people. When reports come in of wars and rumored wars, keep your head and don't panic. This is routine history; this is no sign of the end. Nation will fight nation and ruler fight ruler, over and over. Famines and earthquakes will occur in various places. This is nothing compared to what is coming.

⁹⁻¹⁰ "They are going to throw you to the wolves and kill you, everyone hating you because you carry my name. And then, going from bad to worse, it will be dog-eat-dog, everyone at each other's throat, everyone hating each other.

¹¹⁻¹² "In the confusion, lying preachers will come forward and deceive a lot of people. For many others, the overwhelming spread of evil will do them in—nothing left of their love but a mound of ashes.

¹³⁻¹⁴ "Staying with it—that's what God requires. Stay with it to the end. You won't be sorry, and you'll be saved. All during this time, the good news—the Message of the kingdom—will be preached all over the world, a witness staked out in every country. And then the end will come.

The Monster of Desecration

¹⁵⁻²⁰ "But be ready to run for it when you see the monster of desecration set up in the Temple sanctuary. The prophet Daniel described this. If you've read Daniel, you'll know what I'm talking about. If you're living in Judea at the time, run for the hills; if you're working in the yard, don't return to the house to get anything; if you're out in the field, don't go back and get your coat. Pregnant and nursing mothers will have it especially hard. Hope and pray this won't happen during the winter or on a Sabbath.

²¹⁻²² "This is going to be trouble on a scale beyond what the world has ever seen, or will see again. If these days of trouble were left to run their course, nobody would make it. But on account of God's chosen people, the trouble will be cut short.

The Arrival of the Son of Man

²³⁻²⁵ "If anyone tries to flag you down, calling out, 'Here's the Messiah!' or points, 'There he is!' don't fall for it. Fake Messiahs and lying preachers are going to pop up everywhere. Their impressive credentials and bewitching performances will pull the wool over the eyes of even those who ought to know better. But I've given you fair warning.

²⁶⁻²⁸ "So if they say, 'Run to the country and see him arrive!' or, 'Quick, get downtown, see him come!' don't give them the time of day. The Arrival of the Son of Man isn't something you go to see. He comes like swift lightning to you! Whenever you see crowds gathering, think of carrion vultures circling, moving in, hovering over a rotting carcass. You can be quite sure that it's not the living Son of Man pulling in those crowds.

²⁹ "Following those hard times, Sun will fade out, moon cloud over, Stars fall out of the sky, cosmic powers tremble.

³⁰⁻³¹ "Then, the Arrival of the Son of Man! It will fill the skies—no one will miss it. Unready people all over the world, outsiders to the splendor and power, will raise a huge lament as they watch the Son of Man blazing out of heaven. At that same moment, he'll dispatch his angels with a trumpet-blast summons, pulling in God's chosen from the four winds, from pole to pole.

³²⁻³⁵ "Take a lesson from the fig tree. From the moment you notice its buds form, the merest hint of green, you know summer's just around the corner. So it is with you: When you see all these things, you'll know he's at the door. Don't take this lightly. I'm not just saying this for some future generation, but for all of you. This age continues until all these things take place. Sky and earth will wear out; my words won't wear out.