

Monday, 9/14/20–Read Matthew 23

RELIGIOUS HYPOCRITES DENOUNCED

Then Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples:

2 “The scribes and the Pharisees are seated in the chair of Moses. 3 Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don’t do what they do, because they don’t practice what they teach. 4 They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people’s shoulders, but they themselves aren’t willing to lift a finger to move them. 5 They do everything to be seen by others: They enlarge their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. 6 They love the place of honor at banquets, the front seats in the synagogues, 7 greetings in the marketplaces, and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by people.

8 “But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ because you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers and sisters. 9 Do not call anyone on earth your father, because you have one Father, who is in heaven. 10 You are not to be called instructors either, because you have one Instructor, the Messiah. 11 The greatest among you will be your servant. 12 Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

13 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people’s faces. For you don’t go in, and you don’t allow those entering to go in.

15 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to make one convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a child of hell as you are!

16 “Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever takes an oath by the temple, it means nothing. But whoever takes an oath by the gold of the temple is bound by his oath.’ 17 Blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? 18 Also, ‘Whoever takes an oath by the altar, it means nothing; but whoever takes an oath by the gift that is on it is bound by his oath.’ 19 Blind people! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift? 20 Therefore, the one who takes an oath by the altar takes an oath by it and by everything on it. 21 The one who takes an oath by the temple takes an oath by it and by him who dwells in it. 22 And the one who takes an oath by heaven takes an oath by God’s throne and by him who sits on it.

23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You pay a tenth of mint, dill, and cumin, and yet you have neglected the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy, and faithfulness. These things should have been done without neglecting the others. 24 Blind guides! You strain out a gnat, but gulp down a camel!

25 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup, so that the outside of it may also become clean.

27 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of the bones of the dead and every kind of impurity. 28 In the same way, on the outside you seem righteous to people, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

29 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! You build the tombs of the prophets and decorate the graves of the righteous, 30 and you say, 'If we had lived in the days of our ancestors, we wouldn't have taken part with them in shedding the prophets' blood.' 31 So you testify against yourselves that you are descendants of those who murdered the prophets. 32 Fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors' sins!

33 "Snakes! Brood of vipers! How can you escape being condemned to hell? 34 This is why I am sending you prophets, sages, and scribes. Some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will flog in your synagogues and pursue from town to town. 35 So all the righteous blood shed on the earth will be charged to you, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar. 36 Truly I tell you, all these things will come on this generation.

JESUS'S LAMENTING OVER JERUSALEM

37 "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 See, your house is left to you desolate. 39 For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!' " -- Matthew 23:1-39 (CSB)

Next Steps From Monday's Reading

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Second, describe how you see the theme of God's Kingdom developing in this text:

Third, identify how God is using this passage of Scripture to change you:

Finally, share what you've learned and/or how God spoke to you from this reading with someone in person and/or online..

Tuesday, 9/15/20–Read Matthew 24

DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE PREDICTED

As Jesus left and was going out of the temple, his disciples came up and called his attention to its buildings.

2 He replied to them, "Do you see all these things? Truly I tell you, not one stone will be left here on another that will not be thrown down."

SIGNS OF THE END OF THE AGE

3 While he was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately and said, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what is the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

4 Jesus replied to them, "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and they will deceive many. 6 You are going to hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, because these things must take place, but the end is not yet. 7 For nation will rise up against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these events are the beginning of labor pains.

PERSECUTIONS PREDICTED

9 "Then they will hand you over to be persecuted, and they will kill you. You will be hated by all nations because of my name. 10 Then many will fall away, betray one another, and hate one another. 11 Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. 12 Because lawlessness will multiply, the love of many will grow cold. 13 But the one who endures to the end will be saved. 14 This good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed in all the world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

THE GREAT TRIBULATION

15 "So when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place" (let the reader understand), 16 "then those in Judea must flee to the mountains. 17 A man on the housetop must not come down to get things out of his house, 18 and a man in the field must not go back to get his coat. 19 Woe to pregnant women and nursing mothers in those days! 20 Pray that your escape may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. 21 For at that time there will be great distress, the kind that hasn't taken place from the beginning of the world until now and never will again. 22 Unless those days were cut short, no one would be saved. But those days will be cut short because of the elect.

23 "If anyone tells you then, 'See, here is the Messiah!' or, 'Over here!' do not believe it. 24 For false messiahs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders to lead astray, if possible, even the elect. 25 Take note: I have told you in advance. 26 So if they tell you, 'See, he's in the wilderness!' don't go out; or, 'See, he's in the storerooms!' do not believe it. 27 For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever the carcass is, there the vultures will gather.

THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN

29 "Immediately after the distress of those days, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not shed its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. 30 Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the peoples of the earth will mourn; and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. 31 He will send out his

angels with a loud trumpet, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

THE PARABLE OF THE FIG TREE

32 *“Learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branch becomes tender and sprouts leaves, you know that summer is near. 33 In the same way, when you see all these things, recognize that he is near – at the door. 34 Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things take place. 35 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.*

NO ONE KNOWS THE DAY OR HOUR

36 *“Now concerning that day and hour no one knows – neither the angels of heaven nor the Son – except the Father alone. 37 As the days of Noah were, so the coming of the Son of Man will be. 38 For in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah boarded the ark. 39 They didn’t know until the flood came and swept them all away. This is the way the coming of the Son of Man will be. 40 Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. 41 Two women will be grinding grain with a hand mill; one will be taken and one left. 42 Therefore be alert, since you don’t know what day your Lord is coming. 43 But know this: If the homeowner had known what time the thief was coming, he would have stayed alert and not let his house be broken into. 44 This is why you are also to be ready, because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.*

FAITHFUL SERVICE TO CHRIST

45 *“Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master has put in charge of his household, to give them food at the proper time? 46 Blessed is that servant whom the master finds doing his job when he comes. 47 Truly I tell you, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. 48 But if that wicked servant says in his heart, ‘My master is delayed,’ 49 and starts to beat his fellow servants, and eats and drinks with drunkards, 50 that servant’s master will come on a day he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. -- Matthew 24:1-51 (CSB)*

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Wednesday, 9/16/20–Matthew 25

THE PARABLE OF THE TEN VIRGINS

“At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the groom.

2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 When the foolish took their lamps, they didn’t take oil with them; 4 but the wise ones took oil in their flasks with their lamps. 5 When the groom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep.

6 “In the middle of the night there was a shout: ‘Here’s the groom! Come out to meet him.’

7 “Then all the virgins got up and trimmed their lamps. 8 The foolish ones said to the wise ones, ‘Give us some of your oil, because our lamps are going out.’

9 “The wise ones answered, ‘No, there won’t be enough for us and for you. Go instead to those who sell oil, and buy some for yourselves.’

10 “When they had gone to buy some, the groom arrived, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet, and the door was shut. 11 Later the rest of the virgins also came and said, ‘Master, master, open up for us!’

12 “He replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you!’

13 “Therefore be alert, because you don’t know either the day or the hour.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS

14 “For it is just like a man about to go on a journey. He called his own servants and entrusted his possessions to them. 15 To one he gave five talents, to another two talents, and to another one talent, depending on each one’s ability. Then he went on a journey. Immediately 16 the man who had received five talents went, put them to work, and earned five more. 17 In the same way the man with two earned two more. 18 But the man who had received one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground, and hid his master’s money.

19 “After a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. 20 The man who had received five talents approached, presented five more talents, and said, ‘Master, you gave me five talents. See, I’ve earned five more talents.’

21 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy.’

22 “The man with two talents also approached. He said, ‘Master, you gave me two talents. See, I’ve earned two more talents.’

23 “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful over a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Share your master’s joy.’

24 "The man who had received one talent also approached and said, 'Master, I know you. You're a harsh man, reaping where you haven't sown and gathering where you haven't scattered seed. 25 So I was afraid and went off and hid your talent in the ground. See, you have what is yours.'

26 "His master replied to him, 'You evil, lazy servant! If you knew that I reap where I haven't sown and gather where I haven't scattered, 27 then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, and I would have received my money back with interest when I returned.'

28 " 'So take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten talents. 29 For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have more than enough. But from the one who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 30 And throw this good-for-nothing servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

THE SHEEP AND THE GOATS

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate them one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'

35 " 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; 36 I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me; I was in prison and you visited me.'

37 "Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and take you in, or without clothes and clothe you? 39 When did we see you sick, or in prison, and visit you? '

40 "And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

41 "Then he will also say to those on the left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels! 42 For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink; 43 I was a stranger and you didn't take me in; I was naked and you didn't clothe me, sick and in prison and you didn't take care of me.'

44 "Then they too will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or without clothes, or sick, or in prison, and not help you? '

45 "Then he will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

46 "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." -- Matthew 25:1-46 (CSB)

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Thursday, 9/17/20–Matthew 26

THE PLOT TO KILL JESUS

When Jesus had finished saying all these things, he told his disciples,

2 “You know that the Passover takes place after two days, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.”

3 Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the courtyard of the high priest, who was named Caiaphas, 4 and they conspired to arrest Jesus in a treacherous way and kill him. 5 “Not during the festival,” they said, “so there won’t be rioting among the people.”

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY

6 While Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, 7 a woman approached him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume. She poured it on his head as he was reclining at the table. 8 When the disciples saw it, they were indignant. “Why this waste?” they asked. 9 “This might have been sold for a great deal and given to the poor.”

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them, “Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a noble thing for me. 11 You always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me. 12 By pouring this perfume on my body, she has prepared me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”

14 Then one of the Twelve, the man called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests 15 and said, “What are you willing to give me if I hand him over to you?” So they weighed out thirty pieces of silver for him. 16 And from that time he started looking for a good opportunity to betray him.

BETRAYAL AT THE PASSOVER

17 On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

18 “Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My time is near; I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.’ ” 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, he was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21 While they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

22 Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?”

23 He replied, “The one who dipped his hand with me in the bowl – he will betray me. 24 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.”

25 Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?”

“You have said it,” he told him.

THE FIRST LORD’S SUPPER

26 As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take and eat it; this is my body." 27 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." 30 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

PETER'S DENIAL PREDICTED

31 Then Jesus said to them, "Tonight all of you will fall away because of me, for it is written:

I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you to Galilee."

33 Peter told him, "Even if everyone falls away because of you, I will never fall away."

34 "Truly I tell you," Jesus said to him, "tonight, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times."

35 "Even if I have to die with you," Peter told him, "I will never deny you," and all the disciples said the same thing.

THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he told the disciples, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." 37 Taking along Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 He said to them, "I am deeply grieved to the point of death. Remain here and stay awake with me." 39 Going a little farther, he fell facedown and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will."

40 Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping. He asked Peter, "So, couldn't you stay awake with me one hour? 41 Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

42 Again, a second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done." 43 And he came again and found them sleeping, because they could not keep their eyes open.

44 After leaving them, he went away again and prayed a third time, saying the same thing once more.

45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? See, the time is near. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. 46 Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near."

JUDAS'S BETRAYAL OF JESUS

47 While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived. A large mob with swords and clubs was with him from the chief priests and elders of the people. 48 His betrayer had given them

a sign: "The one I kiss, he's the one; arrest him." 49 So immediately he went up to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi! " and kissed him.

50 "Friend," Jesus asked him, "why have you come? "

Then they came up, took hold of Jesus, and arrested him. 51 At that moment one of those with Jesus reached out his hand and drew his sword. He struck the high priest's servant and cut off his ear.

52 Then Jesus told him, "Put your sword back in its place because all who take up the sword will perish by the sword. 53 Or do you think that I cannot call on my Father, and he will provide me here and now with more than twelve legions of angels? 54 How, then, would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way? "

55 At that time Jesus said to the crowds, "Have you come out with swords and clubs, as if I were a criminal, to capture me? Every day I used to sit, teaching in the temple, and you didn't arrest me. 56 But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away.

JESUS FACES THE SANHEDRIN

57 Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had convened. 58 Peter was following him at a distance right to the high priest's courtyard. He went in and was sitting with the servants to see the outcome.

59 The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false testimony against Jesus so that they could put him to death, 60 but they could not find any, even though many false witnesses came forward. Finally, two who came forward 61 stated, "This man said, 'I can destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.' "

62 The high priest stood up and said to him, "Don't you have an answer to what these men are testifying against you? " 63 But Jesus kept silent. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God."

64 "You have said it," Jesus told him. "But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven."

65 Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? See, now you've heard the blasphemy. 66 What is your decision? "

They answered, "He deserves death! " 67 Then they spat in his face and beat him; others slapped him 68 and said, "Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who was it that hit you? "

PETER DENIES HIS LORD

69 Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. A servant girl approached him and said, "You were with Jesus the Galilean too."

70 But he denied it in front of everyone: "I don't know what you're talking about."

71 When he had gone out to the gateway, another woman saw him and told those who were there, "This man was with Jesus the Nazarene! "

72 And again he denied it with an oath: "I don't know the man! "

73 After a little while those standing there approached and said to Peter, "You really are one of them, since even your accent gives you away."

74 Then he started to curse and to swear with an oath, "I don't know the man! " Immediately a rooster crowed, 75 and Peter remembered the words Jesus had spoken, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly. -- Matthew 26:1-75 (CSB)

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Friday, 9/18/20–Matthew 27-28

JESUS HANDED OVER TO PILATE

When daybreak came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put him to death.

2 After tying him up, they led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor.

JUDAS HANGS HIMSELF

3 Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that Jesus had been condemned, was full of remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders. 4 "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood," he said.

"What's that to us?" they said. "See to it yourself!" 5 So he threw the silver into the temple and departed. Then he went and hanged himself.

6 The chief priests took the silver and said, "It's not permitted to put it into the temple treasury, since it is blood money." 7 They conferred together and bought the potter's field with it as a burial place for foreigners. 8 Therefore that field has been called "Field of Blood" to this day. 9 Then what was spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: They took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him whose price was set by the Israelites, 10 and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me.

JESUS FACES THE GOVERNOR

11 Now Jesus stood before the governor. "Are you the king of the Jews?" the governor asked him.

Jesus answered, "You say so." 12 While he was being accused by the chief priests and elders, he didn't answer.

13 Then Pilate said to him, "Don't you hear how much they are testifying against you?" 14 But he didn't answer him on even one charge, so that the governor was quite amazed.

JESUS OR BARABBAS

15 At the festival the governor's custom was to release to the crowd a prisoner they wanted. 16 At that time they had a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. 17 So when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Who is it you want me to release for you – Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" 18 For he knew it was because of envy that they had handed him over.

19 While he was sitting on the judge's bench, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous man, for today I've suffered terribly in a dream because of him."

20 The chief priests and the elders, however, persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to execute Jesus. 21 The governor asked them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?"

"Barabbas!" they answered.

22 Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Christ?"

They all answered, "Crucify him!"

23 Then he said, "Why? What has he done wrong? "

But they kept shouting all the more, "Crucify him! "

24 When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, "I am innocent of this man's blood. See to it yourselves! "

25 All the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children! " 26 Then he released Barabbas to them and, after having Jesus flogged, handed him over to be crucified.

MOCKED BY THE MILITARY

27 Then the governor's soldiers took Jesus into the governor's residence and gathered the whole company around him. 28 They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. 29 They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him: "Hail, king of the Jews! " 30 Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on the head. 31 After they had mocked him, they stripped him of the robe, put his own clothes on him, and led him away to crucify him.

CRUCIFIED BETWEEN TWO CRIMINALS

32 As they were going out, they found a Cyrenian man named Simon. They forced him to carry his cross. 33 When they came to a place called 'Golgotha' (which means Place of the Skull), 34 they gave him wine mixed with gall to drink. But when he tasted it, he refused to drink it. 35 After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by casting lots. 36 Then they sat down and were guarding him there. 37 Above his head they put up the charge against him in writing: This Is Jesus, the King of the Jews.

38 Then two criminals were crucified with him, one on the right and one on the left. 39 Those who passed by were yelling insults at him, shaking their heads 40 and saying, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross! " 41 In the same way the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him and said, 42 "He saved others, but he cannot save himself! He is the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. 43 He trusts in God; let God rescue him now – if he takes pleasure in him! For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'" 44 In the same way even the criminals who were crucified with him taunted him.

THE DEATH OF JESUS

45 From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. 46 About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, "Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni? " that is, "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me ?"

47 When some of those standing there heard this, they said, "He's calling for Elijah."

48 Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge, filled it with sour wine, put it on a stick, and offered him a drink. 49 But the rest said, "Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

50 But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit. 51 Suddenly, the curtain of the sanctuary was torn in two from top to bottom, the earth quaked, and the rocks were split. 52 The tombs were also opened and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised. 53 And they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, entered the holy city, and appeared to many.

54 When the centurion and those with him, who were keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and the things that had happened, they were terrified and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God! "

55 Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him were there, watching from a distance. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

THE BURIAL OF JESUS

57 When it was evening, a rich man from Arimathea named Joseph came, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. 58 He approached Pilate and asked for Jesus's body. Then Pilate ordered that it be released. 59 So Joseph took the body, wrapped it in clean, fine linen, 60 and placed it in his new tomb, which he had cut into the rock. He left after rolling a great stone against the entrance of the tomb. 61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were seated there, facing the tomb.

THE CLOSELY GUARDED TOMB

62 The next day, which followed the preparation day, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate 63 and said, "Sir, we remember that while this deceiver was still alive he said, 'After three days I will rise again.' 64 So give orders that the tomb be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come, steal him, and tell the people, 'He has been raised from the dead,' and the last deception will be worse than the first."

65 "Take guards," Pilate told them. "Go and make it as secure as you know how." 66 They went and secured the tomb by setting a seal on the stone and placing the guards.

CHAPTER 28

RESURRECTION MORNING

After the Sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to view the tomb.

2 There was a violent earthquake, because an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and approached the tomb. He rolled back the stone and was sitting on it. 3 His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. 4 The guards were so shaken by fear of him that they became like dead men.

5 The angel told the women, "Don't be afraid, because I know you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. 6 He is not here. For he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7 Then go quickly and tell his disciples, 'He has risen from the dead and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; you will see him there.' Listen, I have told you."

8 So, departing quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, they ran to tell his disciples the news. 9 Just then Jesus met them and said, "Greetings! " They came up, took hold of his feet, and worshiped

him. 10 Then Jesus told them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there."

THE SOLDIERS BRIBED TO LIE

11 As they were on their way, some of the guards came into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. 12 After the priests had assembled with the elders and agreed on a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money 13 and told them, "Say this, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him while we were sleeping.' 14 If this reaches the governor's ears, we will deal with him and keep you out of trouble." 15 They took the money and did as they were instructed, and this story has been spread among Jewish people to this day.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

16 The eleven disciples traveled to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had directed them. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped, but some doubted. 18 Jesus came near and said to them, "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth. 19 Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." -- Matthew 27:1-28:20 (CSB)

Next Steps From Friday's Reading

First, write a summary and explanation of this passage in your own words:

Second, describe how you see the theme of God's Kingdom developing in this text:

Third, identify how God is using this passage of Scripture to change you:

Finally, share what you've learned and/or how God spoke to you from this reading with someone in person and/or online.