

Praying Together

Spend time praying together with your group, giving time to share joys and concerns, but making sure you have enough time to actually pray. Jot down your own prayer requests before your gathering begins.

Notes on How to Pray for Others

How to Pray for our Church

Pray for unity

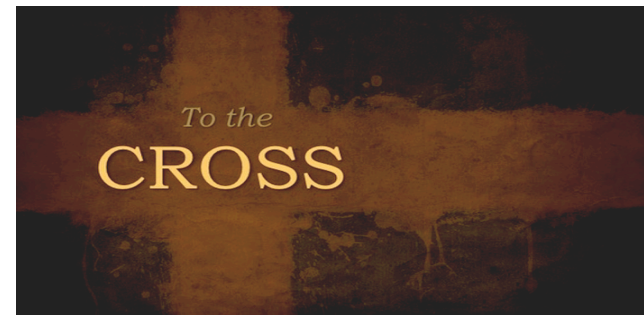
Pray that people will take the time to carefully and prayerfully respond to the congregational survey

Pray for wisdom as we move forward in the senior pastor search process

Pray for the staff and leadership board members during this critical time

Other:

Pray for our Community, the World, and our Missionaries, in particular Tim and Kim Notehelfer with ISI



In Memory of Mary

John 12: 1-8

Eric Sorenson

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Opening Up:

Do people say you're a good listener? How do you think you might become a better listener?

Digging into Our Text:

Read John 12.1-8. Note the characters in the story, then jot down a summary of what happens. What is the significance of Lazarus being mentioned in verse 2? Read Mark's version of this story in Mark 14.3-9. What details does Mark add that helps round out the story?

Wrestle with John 12.7. If you have time, read it in different Bible versions. In essence, what do you think Jesus is getting at? Do you think Mary actually had been saving her perfume for Jesus' burial? What exactly is Jesus commending her for doing? Be honest, isn't Mary's elaborate gift a waste of a lot of money, just like Judas says? (Note Matthew 26.8, which states that the disciples were angry about it too). So then, what does Jesus mean in verse 8, and is there something we're supposed to learn based on that verse, or was it mostly just for them to hear?

Just why does Mary choose to do what she does? To what degree do you think Mary really knew she was anointing Jesus' body, or did she do it without knowing what she was *actually* doing? Look at the story that's found in Luke 10.38-42. What is the better part that Mary chose (verse 42)? How does this further develop your understanding of the character of Mary? Based on Luke 10, and the narrative in John 12, what are some of the differences between Mary's attitude and the attitudes of others toward Jesus? What does she see in him that the others don't?

Mary is clearly a listener. Do you think that Christians today (including yourself) are more likely to talk when they're in the presence of Jesus, or listen? Why is it so difficult to just sit in the presence of Jesus and listen? What is Bonhoeffer driving at when he says, "The Word comes not to the chatter but to him who holds his tongue"? (*Life Together*). Do you ever practice silence in God's presence? How? What's that like?

Trying to simply listen to Jesus poses great challenges because we can so easily get mixed up. (Here is where Dallas Willard's *Hearing God* from Intervarsity Press comes in handy). It is Willard who suggests that the permanent address at which the Word of God can be found is the Bible. Share with your group one or two instances where an encounter with the Bible allowed you to really encounter the voice of God.

Getting Personal:

If you can, take 15-30 minutes to practice *Lectio Divina* (holy listening). You might choose one of the following passages: Psalm 23; Isaiah 55.1-2; John 4.7-15; Galatians 4.1-7; Revelation 21.1-4. Read the passage once or twice, then pause a while, and notice what word or phrase is popping out to you. Read it again, trying to discern why it is that this phrase pops out. What might God be trying to say? Read it yet again, and imagine what God might be calling you to be or do about this.

Things to Ponder:

How can I purposely carve out time to be silent in God's presence just to listen? Is there someone you know, perhaps from your Life Group, with whom you can practice *Lectio Divina* together, sharing your insights as you go through it?