In Between

June 29, 2026 - July 4th, 2026

Monday June 29, 2026 Solemnity of Sts. Peter and Paul
Scripture - Matthew 16:15-16 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” Simon said in reply, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”

Observation: Caesarea Phillippi is north of the Sea of Galilee about 25 mi/40 km in what is now known as the Golan Heights. Jesus went there to this area which was a center of Hellenistic and Pagan worship near the base of Mt. Hermon and the spring which is the beginning of the Jordan River. Philip the tetrarch, developed the city and named it after himself and Caesar Augustus. This event is in all three of the synoptic gospels > Mark, Matthew, and Luke.

Narrative: Two important outcomes from this event: first, while other disciples said other prophets to the first question Jesus asked > what do people say that the Son of Man is > to this question, Simon (which means *has listened)* responded that Jesus was the Messiah and Jesus changed his name to Peter (which means *rock*). Second, and equally important for me, is shortly after this Jesus decides to end his ministry in Galilee and begins his journey to Jerusalem and his ultimate fate.

Question: Who do you say (have you said it to others?) or believe (to the depth of your being) that Jesus was? And why?

Tuesday June 30, 2026
Scripture - Matthew 8:26 Jesus said to them, “Why are you terrified, O you of little faith?” Then he got up, rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was great calm.

Observation: The one of two storm events on the Sea of Galilee, the other being the “walking on water” event. Both are in all three of the synoptic gospels. This one highlights the disciples' lack of faith.

Narrative: Jesus, not being a fisherman by trade was being asked by the disciples something beyond their abilities (several of them were fishermen). Jesus was asleep (calm) while the disciples were scared out of their minds. Many scholars see this as a spiritual test with theological meaning.

Question: When a “storm” really hits your life seriously, to whom or what do you turn?

Wednesday July 1, 2026
Scripture - Matthew 8:33-34 The swineherdsmen ran away, and when they came to the town they reported everything, including what had happened to the demoniacs.Thereupon the whole town came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him they begged him to leave their district.

Observation: The end of the story/miracle of Jesus' encounter with a violent and demon possessed man (two men in Matthew) who lived in the local tombs and came out to meet Jesus. They recognized Jesus as the "Son of God," and pleaded with Jesus to be driven out into a herd of swine, which subsequently rushed down a steep bank into the Sea of Galilee. Jesus was in Gadarenes (part of present day Jordan), one of the Decapolis cities east of the Sea, all of which were Gentile towns.

Narrative: Being Gentile, they could eat pork, and while the two men returned to normal showing Jesus' authority over chaos/demons in the spiritual realm, the townspeople begged Jesus to leave the area. Fear and impact of the financial loss (material reality) implied by Jesus' miracle outweighed the spiritual impact/message of Jesus.

Question: When has the worldly/material reality of your everyday life overtaken/risen above the message/mission of Jesus? How do you rationalize and reconcile it?

Thursday July 2nd, 2026
Scripture - Matthew 9:1-3 He (Jesus) entered a boat, made the crossing, and came into his own town. And there people brought to him a paralytic lying on a stretcher. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Courage, child, your sins are forgiven."

Observation: Jesus was just in Gentile territory of the Decapolis on the East side of the Sea of Galilee and returned to his "own town" of Capernaum which he used as his base camp for his activities in the Galilee region. The main difference in Matthew compared to the similar events in Mark and Luke, is that the men do not lower the paralytic down through the roof; otherwise the challenge/blasphemy of the Pharisees over Jesus' forgiving sins and Jesus' subsequently healing the paralytic is the same.

Narrative: Notice the often overlooked insight that Jesus' saw <u>their</u> faith, those of the paralytic <u>and</u> men carrying him, that moved Jesus to act upon the paralytic's behalf.

Question: How often do you see forgiveness and healing as a group endeavor?

Friday July 3, 2026 Feast of St. Thomas, Apostle
Scripture - John 20: 26a,27 Now a week later his disciples were again inside and Thomas was with them… Then he (Jesus) said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands, and bring your hand and put it into my side, and do not be unbelieving, but believe.”

Observation: Didymus means “twin” or “twofold” in Greek. According to the author of John’s Gospel, the same Thomas who just earlier in (Jn 11:16) after Jesus wishes to go to Jerusalem to visit the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." The same Thomas who by tradition travelled East as far as India to spread “The Way” of Jesus (52 AD) & died a martyr's death by spear (72 AD).

Narrative: Most likely having a twin brother or sister who is unnamed, Thomas’ identity is also symbolic of the duality of Faith vs. Human Nature (commonly). That of awe and wonder of Jesus compared to the authenticity of the Resurrection. On my own knowledge vs the common belief of others. Fear vs fearlessness. Risk taking vs. certainty. You probably can come up with many more…

Question: What is the largest duality of being/thinking/acting that affects your life? How do you address it/move forward/acknowledge its challenge daily?

Saturday July 4, 2026
Scripture - Matthew 9:17 People do not put new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise the skins burst, the wine spills out, and the skins are ruined. Rather, they pour new wine into fresh wineskins, and both are preserved.”

Observation: Disciples of John (the baptist - Jesus’ potential relative and mentor), came and asked why Jesus and his disciples did not fast as they did, along with others like the Pharisees. After all, they were all faithful Jews.

Narrative: Jesus used three analogies to stress a new era/way forward > the wedding/bridegroom, sewing an unshrunk piece of fabric on an old garment, and putting new wine in old wineskins… by analogy in order, there will be time for fasting later, the old is changing to something new, and the old is stiff and brittle and the new will cause bursting if not mixed with the old to transform it.

Question: How much urgency, newness, and transformed by faith do you feel?