

In Between

August 3-8, 2026

Monday August 3rd, 2026

Scripture – Matthew 14:22-26 And at once he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he sent the crowds away. After sending the crowds away he went up into the hills by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, while the boat, by now some furlongs from land, was hard pressed by rough waves, for there was a head-wind. In the fourth watch of the night he came towards them, walking on the sea, and when the disciples saw him walking on the sea they were terrified. 'It is a ghost,' they said, and cried out in fear.

Observation: This occurs right after the multiplication of the loaves and fishes where Jesus provided enough for everyone. The question: would the disciples believe in the same principle, when a storm brews around them?

Narrative: Central to Jesus walking on water, and Peter trying it and sinking, is the theme of strength of faith amidst the storms that occur in life.

Question: What are or have you done, to make your faith in love, and the sacrifice it demands (aka God and Jesus), unshakeable enough to stand up to the heavy storms you will experience in life?

Tuesday August 4th, 2026

Scripture - Matthew 15:1-2, 10-12 Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand. What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them." Then the disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?"

Observation: The verses 3-9 are excluded for today's reading where Jesus answers the Pharisees with a situation of hypocrisy where they do not follow the law as well. Then, after today's reading in verses 15-18, Jesus calls the disciples "dull," for not understanding the parable when they asked him about it.

Narrative: With all four gospels being written 40-70 years after the events of Jesus the authors' were writing about, my opinion is that a great deal of Jesus' humanity is lost. The reading today and tomorrow are exceptions...Jesus as being a bit confrontational and testy with the Pharisees and disciples (amidst today's reading), and the Canaanite woman (tomorrow).

Question: How easy or difficult is it for you to see or imagine that Jesus had a temper, biases, and even prejudged people at times...in his humanity, as not "perfect?"

Wednesday August 5th, 2026

Scripture – Matthew 15:25-28 But the (Canaanite) woman had come up and was bowing low before him. 'Lord,' she said, 'help me.' He replied, 'It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to little dogs.' She retorted, 'Ah yes, Lord; but even little dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters' table.' Then Jesus answered her, 'Woman, you have great faith. Let your desire be granted.' And from that moment her daughter was well again.

Observation: Jesus was a Jew, and as such would also have had strong negative feelings toward Samaritans, Canaanites, and Gentiles generally.

Narrative: The importance of realizing your error in judgment and then correcting it, is one of the most powerfully helpful and human characteristics of Jesus in the Gospel. It was not that Jesus got everything right the first time with everyone, but that upon interaction with a person he adapted perfectly.

Question: Do you tend to hide or run from your mistakes, or do you change your attitude and behavior for the better?

Thursday August 6th, 2026

Scripture – Matthew 17: 1-3 Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There in their presence he was transfigured: his face shone like the sun and his clothes became as dazzling as light. And suddenly Moses and Elijah appeared to them; they were talking with him.

Observation: The transfiguration experience of a few select disciples on Mt. Tabor a couple thousand feet above the valley floor southwest of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus would be transfigured before two famous prophets of Hebrew tradition who each had their own iconic mountain top experience ... Moses representing the law, and Elijah that of prophecy.

Narrative: Would the disciples easily, before that moment, put Jesus in the same class as Moses and Elijah? Equally as important, would they climb their future mountain of discipleship after Jesus was gone to continue the legacy? If not them, then who? It is easy to always think that the work of Jesus, that of sacrificial love, is best suited for someone else more trained, talented, etc.

Question: If that mountain of sacrificial love is in front of you, and you feel called to climb it, will you?

Friday August 7th, 2026

Scripture – Matthew 16: 24-26 Then Jesus said to his disciples, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it. What, then, will anyone gain by winning the whole world and forfeiting his life? Or what can anyone offer in exchange for his life?

Observation: Jesus had just begun to change the tone of his ministry, coinciding with changing the course of his ministry toward Jerusalem. Jesus increasingly turned toward intense training of the closest disciples, and what would be expected of them began in earnest.

Narrative: Jesus' call to a discipleship of sacrificial love demands a choice, a transformation, a re-formation to something different. It is not merely an add-on or supplement. The past will be a memory, as the present view of life is changed forever. To coin a phrase from current culture, if we truly center our life around sacrificial love, we cannot "have our cake and eat it too."

Question: Do you feel transformed or re-formed by the message and mission of Jesus to center your life around sacrificial love? Or is Christianity an add-on for you?

Saturday August 8th, 2026

Scripture – Matthew 17: 14-15 As they were rejoining the crowd a man came up to him and went down on his knees before him. 'Lord,' he said, 'take pity on my son: he is demented and in a wretched state; he is always falling into fire and into water.

Observation: Scholarly conjecture often states that when Jesus was confronted with demented and demon possessed individuals, that some, if not all, would be classified in today's language as the significantly mentally handicapped > schizophrenics, bi-polar, multiple personality disorder, etc.

Narrative: They were one class of the “untouchables” of His time, yet Jesus would talk and touch them. I think having a mental illness today still puts you in the “untouchable” class, with the exception of treatment and the drugs offered by the experts. However, much of society still does not deal with it effectively, much less empathetically and compassionately.

Question: What is your view of the mentally ill generally? If you have someone close to you with a mental illness, has your level of compassion and empathy changed your view?