

# Wins and Losses

February 26 – Mark 8:31-38; Matthew 16:21-27; Luke 9:21-26

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 57 – 308 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We witnessed a turning point in Jesus' ministry in that He began to talk regularly about His eventual suffering and death. This switch followed shortly after His disciples correctly identified Jesus as the Messiah (*Mk. 9:29*). Now that they saw clearly who He was, it was time to tell them why He came. He was not there to set up a kingdom and deliver them from their enemies, as many believed. He was there to die on the cross and pay the penalty for our sin.

In the prophecies of His suffering, death, and resurrection, Jesus began to refer to Himself as the "Son of Man" (*v.31*). Jewish people knew that reference from the book of *Daniel*, who spoke of the Son of Man in his predictions (*Dan. 7:13, 14*). Mark will use this phrase 14 times in his account, and the name Son of Man appears in the New Testament 88 times. Again, the gospel writers didn't want us to miss the fact that Jesus was the Promised Messiah.

When Jesus predicted His suffering and death, not only will He fulfill the prophecies of the Suffering Servant (*Isa. 53; Zech. 12:10; 13:7*), but He will join the chorus of many Old Testament saints who suffered for their righteousness — Joseph, Moses, David, the prophets, and others. Suffering for the Lord is a common theme throughout the Bible, and now the Lord Himself was about to endure it.

For the Son of God to suffer and die was unimaginable to the disciples, who just figured out who He really was. To hear news of Jesus' torture and murder was disturbing, of course, and Peter, the disciple who said what everyone else was thinking, confronted and criticized Jesus for sharing this information. But Jesus recognized that Peter's words were not his own, but Satan's. His enemy was back, and he was using Jesus' disciples against Him, to attempt to stop Jesus from going through with His plan. If Jesus didn't die on the cross, Satan's curse of sin would not be destroyed.

## Daily Reflection

Just as Satan tried to stop Jesus from carrying out His ministry of salvation, he still tries to discourage and derail our ministry today, that of living out the gospel and sharing it with others. But, if we say, "Get behind me Satan," as Jesus did, and wholeheartedly follow the Lord's will for our lives, then we too can expect suffering.

**True discipleship — following the Lord's will and ways — will cost us something.** We might suffer the loss of relationships, our former lifestyle, job advancement, time, worldly gain, and more. We might suffer criticism, skepticism, discouraging comments, insults, rumors or physical harm. What have you "lost" by following Christ?

---

---

---

---

Have you ever struggled with denying yourself and "taking up your cross"? Jesus' words are easier said than done. Perhaps, you are still struggling with holding onto your old life while trying to embrace the new. Describe your transition and the difficulties you've faced.

---

---

---

---

While the things we've lost seem valuable now, one day we will recognize their worthlessness in light of what we've gained in eternity. The missionary Jim Elliot once wrote, **"He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose."**

# Changed In Form

February 27 – Mark 9:1-13; Matthew 16:28-17:13; Luke 9:27-36

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 58 – 307 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus was transfigured before three of his disciples on a high mountain (probably Mt. Hermon). **To be transfigured means to be changed in form**, meaning that the disciples saw Jesus changed from what He was on earth to what He was (and will be again) in heaven. His glory was temporarily veiled during His life, and the disciples got to see Him as He really is. The context of this revelation is His prophecy that “some of you will not see death until you see the kingdom of God” (*Mk. 9:1*), which may also refer to His resurrection and second coming. The transfiguration was a foretaste of those glorious occasions.

This incredible event is rich with symbolism. Remember the connections between Jesus and Moses? There are more of them today. God spoke to Moses on a high mountain in a thick cloud (*Ex. 24:15, 16; 34:6*), and the appearance of his face shined brightly. God spoke today on a high mountain from a cloud, and Jesus’ face shined brightly. Peter recalled this momentous occasion in one of his letters (*2 Pet. 1:16-18*).

As if that weren’t enough to take in, both Moses and Elijah appeared and spoke with Jesus about what was to take place in Jerusalem. Those great men, who represented the Law and the prophets of the Old Testament, were standing there with the Son of God, discussing how He was about to complete all for which they had waited these many years.

Peter was caught up in the moment, perhaps thinking that Christ would build His kingdom. He wanted to commemorate this event with three monuments to these great figures. But God the Father interrupted that thought and said, “Listen to Him!” Moses had prophesied long ago that a great Prophet would come one day. He also implored Israel to “listen to Him” (*Deut. 18:15*). When the cloud cleared, Jesus stood alone, the only one worthy of praise.

## Daily Reflection

This story is so exciting and unusual, I don’t really know where to start with application. What a privilege for Peter, James, and John to be there that day. I can’t imagine what they were thinking, but then to be asked by Jesus not to talk about it until much later? Wow, talk about a difficult thing to keep to yourself!

The word that caught my attention today was *transfigured*, **changed in form**. I did a little research and discovered that the same word was used to describe us as well.

Read *Romans 12:2*. The word *transformed* in this verse is the word *transfigured*. What exactly is the Lord saying to us here?

---

---

---

Now, read *2 Corinthians 3:18*. The same word, *transformed*, is the word *transfigured*. What is promised to us here? Confirm it with *Romans 8:11* and *Philippians 3:20, 21*.

---

---

---

---

We are being transfigured, **changed in form**, day by day, to be more like Christ, until one day when we get to be with Him, and we will be made like Him, brightly shining with glorious, sinless bodies, to live with Him where He is! The same power that transfigured Christ and raised Him from the dead will also resurrect our mortal bodies! **I don’t know about you, but I’m ready to be transfigured!**

# Paradox of Faith

February 28 – Mark 9:14-29; Matthew 17:14-21; Luke 9:37-43a

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 59 – 306 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

After an amazing experience with Jesus on the mountaintop, He and three of His disciples return, like Moses, to the valley below to find a commotion (Ex. 32:15, 16). The other disciples were arguing with scribes, perhaps regarding why they could not heal a demon-possessed boy of his convulsions. Of course, Jesus' timing was perfect, and once again He saved the day.

While the afflicted child was the focus of the story, the issue of faith was the underlying theme. In fact, when Jesus' first heard the problem He replied, "You unbelieving generation! How long must I put up with you?" This rebuke may have been aimed at everyone standing there, but more likely it was meant for the disciples. They still did not have faith, even after all they had seen and done.

Then, when the father of the child spoke with Jesus, he said, "If you can do anything, help us." Again, this statement highlights the real issue — a lack of faith — even though the boy had everyone's attention.

I love Jesus' response to the father. "If I can? All things are possible to Him who believes." In essence, Jesus was saying, "Of course, I can do anything, but do you believe that I can?"

The father's statement gets to the heart of our problem with faith. "I do believe but help my unbelief." **Our faith, at times, is a paradox.** It contradicts itself. We want to believe, but we are often filled with doubt.

Later, when the disciples asked Jesus why they couldn't remove the demon and heal the boy, Jesus replied, "Because of the littleness of your faith. Even with faith the size of a mustard seed you could move mountains, for nothing would be impossible for you." Perhaps, the disciples, who had earlier success casting out demons, began to have confidence in their own ability and forgot that their power comes from God.

## Daily Reflection

**Our paradox of faith is real.** What do I mean?

Write here what you believe about God, who He is and what He can do?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Now, if you believe these things about God, then why do you doubt, worry, and fear?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Like a lunar eclipse, when the smaller moon blocks the light of the bigger sun, we often allow issues in our life to obstruct our great and glorious God. We say that we believe in Him and what He can do, but often betray our belief by our attitudes and actions. **The God who made the mountains can easily move them.**

# Salt, Sin, and Stumbling Blocks

March 1 – Mark 9:30-50; Matthew 17:22-18:10; Luke 9:43b-50

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 60 – 305 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

We read several seemingly unrelated stories, but we will see that they are indeed connected. The context for our passage is Jesus' statement about His future. "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men," He said, "and they will kill Him, and He will be raised on the third day" (*Matt. 17:22, 23*). In essence, Jesus foretold of His death and resurrection. Though the disciples didn't respond, His words sparked an intense conversation about the kingdom He would establish and who would be the greatest disciple in it.

Aware of their pride and selfishness, Jesus pointed their attention to a child and said, "Whoever humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (*18:4*). Then, He followed by saying, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last and the servant of all" (*Mark 9:35*). Ouch! To be great in the eyes of our Savior is to be a humble servant, not to view oneself as the greatest in the kingdom.

Jesus said, "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (*Matt. 18:6*). **Pride is a stumbling block for others.** When we are prideful, we are focused on getting others to look at us and not at Jesus. When we put ourselves on a pedestal, we get in the way and distract attention away from the One who most deserves attention.

Jesus continued talking about stumbling blocks. **A stumbling block is a behavior or attitude (i.e., pride) that leads someone else to sin or fall** (*Lev. 19:14*). For example, Jesus and Peter discussed the Temple tax (*Ex. 30:13, 14; 2 Chron. 24:9*). Jesus pointed out the irony of His paying Temple tax when the Temple existed so that people could worship Him (*Matt. 17:24-27*). But He didn't want His refusal to pay the Temple tax to cause others to stumble or to miss His message of salvation.

Jesus also said that unbelievers can cause themselves to stumble or fall and miss out on God's gift of salvation. "The wages of sin is death," Paul wrote (*Rom. 6:23*). If "the lost" continue in sin (apart from salvation), that sin will lead them to eternal death or hell (*Mk. 9:46-48*). It would be better to lop off a hand or foot, or perhaps pop out an eye, than to allow one of these body parts to cause one to miss heaven. No sin is worth hell, and no sin is worth missing eternal life in heaven.

Finally, Jesus spoke of the last judgment. "Everyone will be salted with fire," meaning purified, tested, or refined (*1 Cor. 3:15*). But then, Jesus switched gears and referred to salt as a preservative. Just as sacrifices were seasoned with salt (*Lev. 2:13; Ezek. 43:24*), we too are to be "salty" people, preserving the peace with others. Perhaps Jesus mentioned this aspect of salt because of the disciples' dispute at the outset of the passage.

## Daily Reflection

Has anyone else's behavior or attitude been a stumbling block for you? If so, how?

---

---

---

---

Has your behavior or attitude been a stumbling block for others? **Cut it off!** But how?

---

---

---

---

# Search and Rescue

March 2 – Matthew 18:11-35

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 61 – 304 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus taught His followers how to deal with others when they sin. This section should be viewed in light of yesterday’s passage regarding stumbling blocks. However, there is a definite transition. Jesus moved from that which causes others or even oneself to stumble to giving instructions for restoring one who has already stumbled, “to save that which is lost” (v.11).

With that theme in mind, Jesus’ parable of the one hundred sheep comes into view (v.12-14). A good shepherd would leave ninety-nine sheep behind to search for the one that is straying. **In the process of the search and rescue, the goal is restoration, to bring the one who is straying back to the fold.** The fold here is God’s people, the church (v.17). Those for which God has redeemed eternally in salvation He also desires to rescue from the devastation wrought by wandering away from His community (v.14).

After sharing the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus explained what it looks like practically “to seek and save” those drifting away. It begins with a private appeal, confronting the individual with his or her sin. A private appeal respects the person’s reputation and saves him or her from embarrassment. Later, Paul added that this step should be done “in a spirit of gentleness,” not in anger or spite (Gal. 6:1).

While this step is the first and most important, it is, unfortunately, the least practiced. Rather than confront a person in sin, we would rather ignore the person or the problem. Even worse, we talk about it with others before we meet with the individual in question. Neither of these responses honors the Lord’s instructions. The latter response is not done in private, and the former demonstrates our lack of love or care for the individual, his or her family, or the church. **Most problems in the church would dissipate if God’s people had the courtesy and courage to follow through with step one of the search and rescue process.**

If a private appeal does not have the desired effect (restoration), then one should proceed to the other steps which ultimately leads to church discipline. If a body of believers follows the Lord’s instructions, in the spirit of restoration, and yet a believer is unwilling to repent and be restored, then their decision to remove that individual from fellowship is justified, and it will be supported by the Lord (v.18-20).

Peter turned the conversation to the subject of personal offenses, asking how many times he should forgive someone. Jesus told a parable explaining the huge debt that God has forgiven. As a result, we should extend forgiveness to those who are indebted to us. **As God has been merciful to us, we must be merciful to others.**

Thus, in *Matthew 18*, Jesus has expressed His expectations for the church. It should be a place of humble servants, who protect the weakest among them, who avoid behaviors and attitudes that cause others to stumble, who search and rescue those who stray, and who extend mercy and forgiveness to those who offend.

## Daily Reflection

I wonder, how well do the people in your church practice *Matthew 18*? Explain.

---

---

---

What about you? Have you demonstrated courtesy and courage in seeking and rescuing those who have gone astray? Why or why not?

---

---

---

# Don't Look Back

March 3 – John 7:1-9; Luke 9:51-62; Matthew 8:18-22

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 62 – 303 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

The Jews were preparing for another holiday called the Feast of Booths or Feast of Tents (*Jn. 7:2*). This festival commemorated God's provision for the people of Israel during their exodus from Egypt (*Lev. 23:33-36; Deut. 16:13-15*). The holiday also allowed the people to thank God for His provision during the recent harvest. Because of this event, everyone was traveling to Jerusalem (or Judea).

But Jesus was aware that there were men in Jerusalem (religious leaders) who were seeking to kill Him, which is one of the reasons He spent most of His time ministering in Galilee (*Jn. 7:1*). Jesus also recognized that God the Father had arranged a specific time for His betrayal, arrest, and crucifixion, and He did not want to work outside that plan. Thus, Jesus said that it was not yet His time (*v.6, 8*).

Of course, that reasoning did not make sense to His brothers, who thought Jesus should take advantage of the large crowds to make a name for Himself through His miracles. "No one does anything in secret when He himself seeks to be known publicly," they said (*v.4*). "Show yourself to the world!" Though they will come around later, at this time Jesus' brothers did not believe that He was anything special, certainly not the Messiah (*v.5; Acts 1:14*). This may have been innocent sibling rivalry, but in context, Satan might have been using Jesus' brothers to put Him in danger.

With this story in the background, Jesus attempted to travel through Samaria, but the people there refused to show Him hospitality. Jesus was not welcome at home or abroad. Following this rejection, someone told Him that he was willing to go wherever Jesus went, but the man did not have any idea what he was saying (*Lk. 9:57*). To follow Jesus meant rejection by family, friends, and neighbors.

## Daily Reflection

Two others wanted to follow Jesus, but one had to bury his father, and the other wanted to say goodbye to his family. Jesus replied, "Let the dead bury the dead," and, "No one who looks back... is fit for the kingdom of God."

At first, Jesus' response sounds harsh, but there is more to these statements. Remember, Jesus knew men's hearts, and His remarks usually addressed the heart, not the situation (*Matt. 12:25; Mk. 2:8; Lk. 6:8; 16:15; Jn. 2:25*). Of course, Jesus wants us to honor our parents, but He knew that the man who asked to bury his father had an ulterior motive. He either wanted to wait until a better time, he wanted everything in order, or he wanted his financial inheritance. Whatever the reason, Jesus cut to the quick. **The man was worried about something in the "dead world" when he had more important work to do.**

The one who wanted to say goodbye to his family may have also wanted to wait for a better time, but it's more likely that he was missing his old life. He was looking back (at the past), instead of looking ahead (at the future). **He was distracted by the ungodly world and losing sight of God's call on his life.**

So then, within three conversations, Jesus described how difficult it was (and is) to follow Him. It may result in the loss of one's former way of life, one's job, wealth, or material comforts, or one's relationships. Read *Philippians 3:12-14*. **What has been the most difficult "separation" in your life after coming to Christ? Explain.**

---

---

---

---

---

# Righteous Judgment

March 4 – John 7:10-53

BiAY.org | Daily Reflections NT  
Day 63 – 302 Days to Go

## Today in Your Reading

Jesus traveled to Jerusalem secretly for the Feast of Booths or Tents, rather than publicly as his brothers wanted (v.3, 4). The reason He went secretly was that there were Jewish leaders looking for Him, to seize Him and kill Him (v.11, 19, 32). It was obvious that Jesus had angered the Pharisees and Sadducees and that they had made known their intentions towards Him, for even the people were afraid to talk about Him for fear of reprisal (v.13).

However, despite this undercurrent of resistance to Jesus, He appeared in the Temple teaching during the festival. While the people marveled at His knowledge and authority of Scripture, He pointed out the leaders' blatant disregard for the Law of Moses (v.19-24). Though they wanted to arrest Jesus for healing on the sabbath, He pointed out that they circumcised on the sabbath. This was a double standard.

Throughout the rest of the passage, the leaders and people discussed who Jesus is and how to know. Was He really the Messiah? Or was He the Prophet that Moses predicted would come? The Messiah would be a descendant of David from Bethlehem, they said, not someone from Galilee. No one bothered to investigate His birthplace or His genealogy. They just made ignorant assumptions.

In the meantime, Jesus took advantage of the festival activities to share the good news of salvation. Traditionally, on the last day of the celebration, a golden scepter of water was brought from the Pool of Siloam, paraded through the city, and presented at the Temple with singing and worship. Passages from Isaiah were read, such as, "You will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation" (12:3). Jesus seized this moment to present Himself as the living water, also quoting from Isaiah. "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink" (55:1; Jn. 7:37). He also prophesied of the life-giving Spirit who would come later (Acts 2).

## Daily Reflection

Did you notice the way that talk of Jesus divided the people into different camps? There were those who were confused about Him and made **many false assumptions**. There were those who outright dismissed Him. There were those who listened carefully to His words and even believed that He was the Messiah, and then there were those who sought to destroy Him.

The topic of Jesus still divides people today. There are those who think He was a good man, maybe even a prophet. There are those who follow Him as their Savior. There are those who are confused about Him and make **many false assumptions**. Then, there are those who outright dismiss Him or try to destroy any influence He may have.

Why do you think people have such a varied response to Jesus?

---

---

---

---

Jesus knew the minds of the people and cut to the heart with His comments. He said, "**Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment**" (v.24). What did Jesus mean by "judge with righteous judgment?"

---

---

---

---

Are you quick to judge people and situations, or do you take your time to judge righteously?