



Mt Olive Lenten Devotional 2026

February 18 Mark 10:32-34

In this passage, Jesus intentionally begins his journey to the city of Jerusalem. This is surprising! All of his disciples know that he will face great hostility in Jerusalem because the religious leaders adamantly oppose him. And so, the disciples are “astonished” and “afraid.” Jesus knows that the hostility will lead to his crucifixion, and he knows that crucifixion is his ultimate purpose. So Jesus leads the way to Jerusalem!

Marvel at Jesus’ intentional pursuit of the cross! His love, his humility, and his commitment to save all who will trust in him. And choose to live with greater intentionality. Don’t let days just flitter away—live with purpose and direction! Ask God what you should intentionally pursue in your life today!

February 19 Luke 18:18-27

This passage contrasts God’s miraculous work inside us with our weak, self-righteous efforts to be good. The ruler who comes to Jesus is a good person outwardly, but his heart has not been changed as it should. His heart is controlled by a love for money. Jesus brings this out in his challenge to this ruler. The disciples of Jesus are shocked that a man who has been obviously blessed by God could be lacking something! Furthermore, if a blessed man doesn’t have God’s approval, then who can be saved? Jesus makes it clear that our evaluation should not be based on outward circumstances, but on the condition of a person’s heart.

How is your heart today? What internal influences have the greatest pull within you? Will you sadly walk away from Jesus, or humbly bow before him and let him change your heart?

February 20 Matthew 20:29-34

As Jesus continues his journey to Jerusalem, two blind men interrupt his travel. Jesus compassionately takes the time to heal them. This story highlights Jesus’ love for humanity, and his great power to heal. But why another story about the compassion and power of Jesus when the primary focus is Jesus’ commitment to go to Jerusalem to be crucified for our sins. This story reminds us how Jesus is using his compassion and power. His compassion is not just for two blind men, but for you and me as he keeps moving toward the cross. And Jesus, who has great power to heal the blind, will not use that power to prevent his enemies from crucifying him. He will set aside his great power, and humbly go to the cross for you and me.

Give thanks to the Lord for his great compassion and power—which he has used to set us free from sin, darkness, and the penalty of hell. And consider how you can show compassion, or exert your power, to be helpful to others.

February 21 Luke 19:1-10

The story of Zacchaeus teaches that merely feeling badly about our sins is insufficient. We are required to live a new life with new behavior! True followers of Jesus make choices every day that demonstrate genuine transformation.

How has God changed you? How is God still changing you?



February 23 Luke 19:11-27

Just before Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey, he tells his disciples a parable. In the parable, Jesus reminds his followers that we are called to be productive for Jesus our King! Those who faithfully serve the Lord will be told one day, “Well done, my good servant!” The parable also warns those unfaithful to the Lord that they will face a serious judgment.

Take time to envision the Day of Judgment. Will you hear the words, “Well done, my good servant!” Also, take time to pray for those who do not know Jesus. Pray for an opportunity to tell them about Jesus before they face serious judgment.

February 24 Matthew 21:1-11

When Jesus rode into Jerusalem on that first Palm Sunday, he was evaluated by two different crowds. One crowd from Galilee had seen his many miracles and were convinced he would now become king of Israel. The other crowd from Jerusalem had seen very little of Jesus. In verse 10, the Jerusalem crowd asks, “Who is this?” But interestingly, neither crowd really knows Jesus! Neither crowd understands that Jesus is God in human flesh ready to receive the full payment of sin on a cross.

To truly know Jesus is a great blessing. To know what he accomplished at the cross is also a great blessing. But to humble yourself before him and receive him as your Savior is the ultimate blessing. Have you done this? If you have, praise God for this ultimate blessing!

February 25 Luke 19:41-44

There are times in life when our reflection should cause great emotion! This is especially so when we consider the consequences of loved ones rejecting Jesus. Their rejection should break our hearts and prompt us all the more to plead with them to come to Jesus! When Jesus reached the top of the Mount of Olives, he saw the city of Jerusalem, and he was moved to tears! He knew that many were about to reject him as the Messiah, and he also knew that the city would receive judgment in 40 years when the Romans attack it. Rejection of Jesus has consequences.

Pray with passion for loved ones who have yet to give their lives to Jesus. Kneel in prayer, or lay face down, or look over several pictures of your loved ones—and then pray with all your heart.

February 26 Matthew 21:12-17

When Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem, he went straight to the temple. At the temple, he chased away all those who were focused on buying and selling animals needed for worship. The buying and selling of these animals was necessary, but not at the temple! The temple needed to be a place of reverence, contemplation, and awe—not a loud chaotic marketplace! The profiteers were hindering meaningful connection with God.

Regular connection with God is necessary in the midst of the busyness of life. But the connection must be genuine. We want God to know our heart-felt desire for him, and we want to be sure to receive from him whatever he has for us. Enjoy honest time with God.



February 27 Matthew 21:18-22

As Jesus is walking to Jerusalem the day after Palm Sunday, he goes to a fig tree to get a fig. The tree should have some figs since it already has leaves, but it does not. Jesus then curses this fig tree because it was advertising that it had fruit when it didn't. The tree is hypocritical, so-to-speak. This becomes a picture for the disciples to understand why Jesus is being so confrontational toward the religious leaders—they are not producing a fruitful ministry for God. They are hypocrites. Interestingly, Jesus goes on to make a strong statement about the power of faith. A disciple can be fruitful in ministry—even seeing miraculous fruit—if they have genuine faith.

And so, what kind of fruit are you seeing in your life? Is God miraculously changing you and others? Pray for fruitfulness, and then believe the fruit will be produced!

February 28 Mark 12:13-17

The religious leaders of Jerusalem thought they could trap Jesus and then use his words against him to have him arrested. So they ask Jesus about paying taxes. If Jesus says to pay taxes, the people of Jerusalem will be angry. If Jesus says not to pay taxes, the religious leaders will report Jesus to the Roman authorities as a law breaker. But the response of Jesus is so wise, and gets to the real heart of the matter. If Caesar has put his image on a coin, then the coin belongs to him, so don't complain about giving back to him what belongs to him—pay your taxes. But more importantly, recognize that God has stamped his image on us—so give your life back to God! The religious leaders are amazed and silenced!

Regular times of rededication to God should be woven into our lives. Take time to pledge yourself whole-heartedly to God. Write out your words of dedication, and then pray them back to the Lord.

March 2 Mark 12:28-34

One of the religious teachers who has been listening to his colleagues try to trick Jesus, is deeply impressed with Jesus' answers. As a result, he does not want to trick Jesus, but learn from Jesus. He asks Jesus what is the greatest commandment. Jesus says to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. The religious teacher is impressed, and Jesus tells him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And yet, he is not in the kingdom of God. Knowing good things about God is still very different from submitting to God and being changed by him.

Many people will agree that loving God is a good thing, and even more will agree that loving one's neighbor is a really good thing. But rarely will someone admit how difficult it is to obey these two commands. In fact, obedience to them is impossible unless God's Spirit lives in us! And so, when talking to others about Jesus, make sure they know more than the commands of God—make sure they know how to actually obey them!



March 3 Matthew 22:41-46

In this passage, Jesus asks the religious leaders a question about the Messiah. Jesus asks, “Whose son is he?” They answer correctly when they say, “The son of David.” However, their answer is incomplete. The Messiah is more than human, he is also divine. To prove his point, Jesus quotes Psalm 110:1 which was accepted as a verse about the Messiah. In this verse, King David (with insight from the Holy Spirit) reveals that the Messiah is divine when he writes, “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’” This verse reveals that the Messiah is equal to God the Father.

It is crucial to believe that Jesus is God. As God, Jesus is a perfect sacrifice for our sins, and he is the only human to have the capacity of God to receive the penalty of our sin. Praise God for his perfect plan of salvation!

March 4 Luke 22:1-6

The religious leaders and Judas want to “get rid of Jesus” and so plans are made to have Jesus arrested in private so the crowds do not rise up to defend Jesus. Since these men are harboring such evil toward God, this allows Satan to be present and to actually enter Judas. Now, under Satan’s influence, all of these men are deceived to a greater extent and are led to commit the horrific sin of having the Son of God crucified.

Satan remains an enemy of all followers of Christ. Christians are most vulnerable to his attacks when we allow sin to remain in our lives—especially sins related to lies about God, or lies that lead to destructive behaviors such as anger. Remember the promise of James 4:7 “Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” Obey this verse as the need arises!

March 5 John 13:1-11

In that day, only the lowest slave would take on the task of washing someone’s feet. But Jesus, the king of the universe, takes on this lowly task. He even washes the feet of Judas who is already under the influence of Satan and preparing to betray Jesus. Interestingly, there is no account of a superior ever washing the feet of an inferior from all the records of the ancient world—except for this one example of Jesus.

Never doubt the calling of every Christian to be a servant. Jesus has set an amazing example for us to follow! And so, who could you serve today?

March 6 John 13:12-17

Keep in mind verse 17: “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” Humbly serving, as Jesus teaches, leads to blessing! Service is not a frustrating obligation or a bothersome burden—service is a blessing! Service frees us from selfish and petty desires, and leads us to a more fulfilling life!

Of course, knowing these things is not enough! We must “do them.” The blessing comes from the doing, not the mere knowing! Be a mindful servant for the Lord!



March 7 John 13:31-38

One of Jesus' most significant commands is: "Love one another." Interestingly, he calls this is a "new command", even though this basic command is found in the Old Testament. So how is it new? It's new because it's based on the example of Jesus—his example of going to the cross. Jesus tells all disciples to love each other "as I have loved you." And so, Jesus is the new standard of what it means to love. We love the way he loves.

People can counter our arguments for Jesus, and they can scoff at our good behavior. But sincere love is a powerful form of communication that always makes an impact. Our world will always long for genuine love. Let's love like Jesus!

March 9 John 14:1-7

I grew up singing a lot of songs about heaven! Christians should always sing a lot of songs about heaven! It is one of the greatest blessings of following Jesus! In this passage, Jesus teaches that when our hearts are troubled, we can remember, he has prepared a place for us! Hallelujah!

Sing a song about heaven!

March 10 John 15:1-8

In these verses, Jesus gives us a wonderful picture of living the Christian life: we "remain" in Jesus. To remain in Jesus means that we stay connected to him and allow his life to continue to nurture our life. That is, we stay mindful of his presence, we stay in continual dialog with him through prayer, and we obey him with every step. Remaining in Jesus is how we live the Christian life!

Throughout the day, keep making meaningful connections with Jesus. Praise him, thank him, and ask him for guidance. Remaining in Jesus is how we live the Christian life!

March 11 John 15:9-17

Verses 9-17 clarify what Jesus means by "bear fruit" in the previous verses, 1-8. This is helpful because the phrase "bear fruit" should not be made to mean whatever we want it to mean. And so, verses 9-17 show that to "bear fruit" has the clear meaning of exhibiting certain character qualities such as love and joy. And bearing fruit is related to carrying out the master's business. That is, as we serve the Lord Jesus in this life, our acts of service are examples of bearing fruit for our master's business.

And so, do not simply carry out your own business tasks today. Be mindful of doing your master's business. By this, you will bear fruit!

March 12 John 17:1-12

Jesus prays this prayer on his way to the Garden of Gethsemane. And so, before he enters the garden to embrace his mission of going to the cross, Jesus clarifies his focus—he has come to glorify his Father and to glorify himself. That is his focus! The cruelty of the cross will not deter him from this great desire—to glorify the Father and himself.



Jesus reminds us of what matters most: Living for the glory of God! When we are captured by God's glory, we can endure difficult hardships and painful trials. For when we are focused on what matters most—God's glory, the stuff of this world has no hold on us!

March 13 John 17:20-26

Jesus prayed for you and me. In these verses, he prays for “those who will believe in me”. And so, as Jesus is preparing himself for a brutal execution, he takes time to pray for you and me. That is encouraging! His prayer has a specific focus on our unity with other believers, and an emphasis on knowing God—with the idea of “knowing” meaning personal experience of God.

What a great prayer! Pray this for specific believers that you know. Pray that each will be committed to unity with other believers, and pray that each will continue to experience God personally in their lives!

March 14 Luke 22:39-46

Jesus is facing his greatest temptation—the temptation to avoid the cross. In order to conquer this temptation, Jesus prayed. It is interesting to note that even Jesus needed to pray earnestly, and then more earnestly, when facing temptation.

And so, how much more do you and I need to pray earnestly, and then more earnestly, when facing temptation! We can often trace our collapse to temptation back to the time we stopped praying in the face of that temptation! Prayer has power—so utilize this great power, especially when tempted!

March 16 Luke 22:47-53

This passage provides an example of how prayer makes a difference. As the arresting party arrives in the garden, the disciples, who have been sleeping and not praying, respond impetuously and violently. Jesus, who has been praying, is better prepared. In a composed manner, he corrects his reckless disciples, heals the man who was hit by a sword, and then rebukes the religious leaders for being immersed in darkness. He speaks truth in love, which is a clear result of prayer.

Would you like better responses, especially in times of stress? Then pray. Would you like to be composed and speak truth in love? Then pray. And pray earnestly.

March 17 Mark 14:53-65

This passage highlights the religious leaders forcing their will in the trial of Jesus. Consider: they quickly convene this meeting in the middle of the night, they never pray, they have no evidence against Jesus but are searching for evidence, and the law requires that they have at least two witnesses to testify against Jesus but they can't even find two witnesses that agree!

Forcing our will is selfish and dangerous. The more we press, the more enslaved we become to our own agenda. As believers, we must be committed to patiently seeking God's will. God will provide direction that is not forced. My dad used to tell me, “God leads, Satan pushes.” Keep that in mind as you look for God's leading in your life.

**March 18** Matthew 26:69-75

In fear, Peter denies knowing Jesus. What is surprising is that his first two denials are before two different servant girls who had no social standing or power. Peter could have told the truth to each of them and then commanded them to leave him alone. Even if they went to tell someone, he could have easily escaped. But fear gripped him so that he is irrational and a liar.

Fear can have power over us. What triggers your fear? Talk to God about your fears and ask him for Spirit-empowered strategies to combat fear's negative influence.

March 19 Mark 15:1-15

It is clear to Pilate, that Jesus is innocent. After all, he asks, "What crime has he committed?" And though Pilate should have been strong enough to do the right thing and release Jesus, he took a different tactic. Pilate intentionally stirred up the crowd by referring to Jesus as their king. Once they are in a frenzy, he then satisfies their desire and has Jesus crucified. Pilate has likely taken this tactic to avoid his own guilt, and to place the guilt on the crowd. But on the day of judgment, Pilate will be judged by Jesus for his manipulative and deceptive ways.

Jesus goes to the cross to receive the judgment we all deserve. Openly confessing Jesus as our Savior and King transfers our guilt to Jesus. Be thankful that the day of judgment is not something Christians fear! And warn someone who needs the reminder that a day of judgment is coming.

March 20 Matthew 27:27-31

The Roman soldiers mock Jesus because of his claim to be a king. They ridicule him with kingly props that are a sham, and they contemptuously cry, "Hail, king of the Jews" as they kneel before him in mockery. They spit on him, and repeatedly beat his head with a staff—something that would never be done to a king. Except... Jesus is a king. And so, this shocking scene becomes ironically memorable that Jesus is a king... and painfully memorable that many fail to see him as king.

Bow before Jesus and honor him as king. And pray for someone who has yet to see... that Jesus is the KING!

March 21 Luke 23:32-35

Jesus shows a stunning kindness toward his enemies by praying that they would be forgiven! His prayer is specifically for those who have called for his crucifixion, and for those who have physically tortured him. His prayer asks the Father to withhold judgment for the ignorance and cruelty that has been shown to him. Let his example stir in your heart!

This prayer of Jesus reminds us of the high call of following Jesus. We do not seek revenge on our enemies, but instead, we pray for their blessing and their repentance. Consider this prayer of Jesus and then pray accordingly.



March 23 Luke 23:36-43

One of the criminals who was crucified next to Jesus, initially hurled insults at Jesus (as told by Matthew and Mark). But then he had a change of heart. He rebukes the other criminal saying that they should fear God and recognize they are getting the punishment they deserve. In this rebuke, he recognizes and confesses his sin. Then he asks Jesus to remember him when he comes into his kingdom. In this statement, he recognizes that Jesus is the king of God's eternal kingdom. And so, Jesus assures him that we will be in God's kingdom—an eternal paradise—even that day!

This is a beautiful scene during a horrific event. But this interaction conveys the amazing power of humble faith! When we are humble before the Lord, we are blessed beyond our imagination! Take time to humble yourself before God.

March 24 John 19:25-27

In this passage, Jesus assigns the care of his mother to his disciple, John. But why? Mary, who is likely a widow, has other sons. Why give John this task? Because John is a believer and none of Jesus' brothers are believers yet. Jesus wants his mother to be cared for by a believer who will keep her connected to other believers.

Staying connected to other believers is critical for the life of a Christian. And so, make a special connection with another believer. Let them know how much you value their relationship. Staying connected to other believers keeps us closely connected to Jesus!

March 25 Mark 15:33-36

This is a surprising statement by Jesus, and a statement that is difficult to fully appreciate. Jesus experiences abandonment from God. What that meant in terms of their personal relationship... and what took place in the spirit realm... is not explained. We simply recognize that Jesus has been forsaken by God the Father. The one who did not know sin, became sin. And the one who had perfect communion with the Father experiences for the first time, a break in that communion.

At this time, Jesus embodied all the consequences of sin—its evil and its punishment. It is something that is impossible to truly appreciate. However, what we should appreciate is this: because Jesus has been abandoned by God, we never have to face abandonment. For all eternity, we have full acceptance from God! So give praise to God for what has been done on your behalf!

March 26 John 19:28-29

This statement by Jesus reveals his true humanity. He had experienced severe physical pain on the cross and was greatly dehydrated. He will not be able to utter his final statements without physical help. And so he gets the physical help he needed.

As believers, we should never downplay a person's physical or emotional needs. The Bible doesn't disregard such needs, so neither should we. We need physical and emotional care... because God made it that way! And so, receive the care you need today, and offer that care to others.



March 27 John 19:30

Jesus said, “It is finished.” This is a cry of triumph! He has accomplished all that is needed for our salvation! Amen! Interestingly, this is the only statement Jesus made on the cross that was not directed to someone personally—whether to his heavenly Father, or a criminal, or his mother. In this statement, Jesus speaks to all! The cross, and what Jesus accomplished on the cross, is for everyone! Amen!

Nothing needs to be added by us for our salvation! We freely accept it as a precious gift through our faith in Jesus. Christians should keep in mind the difference between Doing and Done. Some Christians think they should focus on all the things they should Do to receive God’s acceptance. But Jesus is telling us to focus on the Done. What he has Done is all we need! Give praise to God! Our salvation is finished!

March 28 Luke 23:44-49

In this final cry from the cross, Jesus quotes Psalm 31:5. The psalm itself is a psalm often used in prayer by the Jews to express their confidence in God! So Jesus is not disillusioned, or filled with anger, but filled with hope! He does not shrivel up and get overtaken by death, but confidently chooses his moment of departure.

This shows us that the death of Jesus on the cross has been orchestrated by God! The cross is an essential part of our salvation! God worked through every detail so that we could be saved—saved from our horrific rebellion against God, saved from the deceitfulness of sin, and saved from God’s holy wrath toward sin. God did what was needed, so that we could obtain what we needed! Confess your sins, and praise God for forgiveness!

March 30 Hebrews 12:1-3

In the time of Jesus, the cross was an absolute object of shame. Roman statesman and philosopher, Cicero, described the cross as the “most cruel and terrifying punishment.” The cross was so shameful, that Cicero said the word “cross” should not be mentioned in polite society. Jesus however, scorned such shame, and endured its cruelty.

Jesus is our example. We fix our gaze upon him. We make every effort to be faithful like him. And this regular consideration of Jesus’ example, keeps us from growing weary and losing heart. Take time to consider Jesus going to the cross. What comes to mind?

March 31 Philippians 2:5-11

These verses celebrate the humility and sacrifice of Jesus. His example is the standard for our behavior—especially our behavior toward others! And so if we want to know what God expects of us, we simply look to Jesus—especially his willingness to go to the cross—and we learn precisely what God expects.

Make a sacrifice for others. But keep your sacrifice hidden. Keeping it hidden will also keep you humble.

**April 1** 1 Peter 2:21-25

When we recognize that God the Father did not shield Jesus from the insults and suffering of this world, then we should quickly conclude that we will not be shielded from the insults and suffering of this world. But more than this, Jesus responded well—he gave back better! And so can we! Through Jesus, we “die to sin” and “live for righteousness” because Jesus heals the wounds caused by the insults and the suffering. And so, we can give back better!

Take time to ask Jesus for the healing of any wounds that continue to plague your heart. Thank him for the healing power he will direct into your life. And pledge that you will strive to give back better!

April 2 Colossians 2:13-15

We often recognize the great forgiveness we receive through the cross. As this passage declares, “all our sins... which condemned us... he has nailed to the cross”. Amen! But notice also that the cross defeated our spiritual enemies—the “powers and authorities” (which refer to Satan and his demonic cohorts). The cross has triumphed over them! We have real power over the devil’s temptations, lies, and fiery arrows that he aims at us!

Take time to renounce temptations you have given into... or lies you have believed... or other ways that Satan has tricked you, or seduced you. Renounce these sinful failures in the name of Jesus! Ask for ongoing protection, and begin walking in greater victory!

April 3 1 Corinthians 1:17-19

The message of the cross is simple. The message of the cross can be understood by a child. The message of the cross never needs to be taught with flare and eloquence. It’s simplicity is by God’s design. But though it is simple, the message of the cross comes with the very power of God! A power that saves us to heaven, and saves us from hell!

Thank God that you know this simple message. Thank God that you are saved to heaven and from hell. Then, go and share this simple message with someone who needs to hear it!

April 4 Romans 8:31-38

The cross declares God’s great love for us! A love we will always have and never lose! A love that keeps Jesus interceding for us... a love that makes us conquerors in really hard times... and a love we will enjoy for all eternity. We know all this is true (and even more could be said) but we know this is all true because God did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all! Amen! What a great God we serve!

What people long for most is love. And Christians have received the greatest love of all—God’s love. Sit and soak in God’s love. Be changed by it. And be ready to show that love to a world that is longing for it!