

## **High School Home Study**

**Week of February 1, 2026**

### **The Public Ministry of Jesus**

#### **ABOUT THIS WEEK**

This week focuses on the public ministry of Jesus and how his words, actions, and miracles in this three-year period point to his identity as the Messiah and Son of God through a journey through different moments in Jesus' ministry, familiarizing ourselves with the events and breaking open their significance.

**The goal of this week** enhance our understanding of Jesus' public ministry and encourage us to place our faith in Jesus as the Son of God and accept his Kingdom.

#### **MAIN POINTS**

1. Jesus spent three years ministering in and around Judea, proclaiming that the Kingdom of God had come.
2. Jesus' teachings, actions, and miracles bore witness to his identity as the Messiah and Son of God.
3. Jesus' public ministry presents us with a decision to either follow him as his disciples or reject who he claimed to be.

#### **KEY TERMS**

Disciple - One who conforms their life to the example of their master and teacher. Followers of Jesus are called to pattern their lives and actions after Jesus' example by keeping the faith and bearing witness to it. (CCC 1816)

Kingdom of God - The reign of God over his people. Jesus comes to proclaim this kingdom, which is fully present in him and already made visible in part through the Church. (CCC 543-544, 763, 2816)

Messiah - The Anointed One of God, promised by the prophets of the Old Testament, whose mission is to bring salvation to Israel and the whole world. Jesus reveals his identity as the Messiah through his ministry and the Paschal Mystery. (CCC 436, 711-714)

## **Introduction**

- Have you ever been hiking in the woods or on a mountain? If so, you likely know that taking a trail with signs and a path of some kind assures us that the way we are walking is somewhat safe and leads to a destination worth discovering. Alternately, when we ignore the path that has been created, we risk continuously running into obstacles with no guarantee that the path leads anywhere safe or compelling.
- This experience of following the path offers a helpful analogy for our faith. As we walk through life, there are many “paths” we can take. We can chase pleasure, fun, money, power, or anything else. Some of these paths lead to temporary happiness. Others lead to heartbreak, disappointment, and hurt.
- Among these paths common to human history, a man named Jesus came along and blazed a new trail. He promised that his path leads to ultimate and lasting happiness. And he backed up what he promised.
- As Christians, we want to follow the path of Jesus. In his public ministry, he showed us what it means to live in relationship with our Father and proclaimed the coming of his own kingdom. In doing so, he gave us a new path to follow. (CCC 519-521)
- Jesus’ public ministry refers to the time he spent teaching, healing, and working miracles in and around Judea prior to his Crucifixion. He spent three years walking with people, healing the sick, and preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God. The Son of God walked among us and showed the dignity to be found in each human being by drawing near to people and meeting them in their everyday lives in the midst of his own extraordinary life and mission.
- Jesus’ public ministry was foretold by the prophet Isaiah. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus adopts these words as a sort of mission statement for his public ministry.

### ***SCRIPTURE: Grab your Bible and read Luke 4:18-19***

- However, Jesus does not merely stop with reading the familiar passage; he forever changes its meaning by concluding, “Today this passage is fulfilled in your hearing.” Jesus is doing a new thing! He is saying he is the Messiah — the long-awaited Savior.
- As Messiah, Jesus comes to proclaim the Kingdom of God — the reign of God over his people, where the poor are blessed, the mighty are cast down, and death no longer has the final word. Jesus will spend the bulk of his ministry describing what this kingdom is like, using the word “kingdom” over ninety-four times throughout the four gospels.

Jesus doesn't just talk about the Kingdom; he makes it present. Throughout the three years of Jesus' public ministry, we can see him at work, revealing who he is through his words, actions, and healings. The teachings, miracles, and everyday moments communicate a unified message: he is the Messiah, and God's Kingdom is at hand.

- We're going to journey through Jesus' public ministry by traveling to stations that explore some of the most significant moments from his public ministry. Let's get started!

## **1: Jesus' Baptism**

Scripture to read on your own: Matthew 3:13-17

- Jesus comes to John the Baptist to be baptized in the Jordan River. We are given a powerful glimpse into his identity when the heavens open, the Spirit descends as a dove, and the Father's voice is heard: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased."
- When Jesus is baptized, we hear that the Holy Spirit comes to rest on him. Anointed with this Spirit, he is prepared for his ministry of proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
- At the beginning of his public life, Jesus' unique relationship to the Father is made explicit. Everything he does originates in this relationship and his identity as the Son of God. Through our Baptism, he invites us to do the same — to live from our identity as God's sons and daughters. (CCC 537)

Discussion Question to journal with: As a baptized Christian, you are also God's son or daughter in whom he delights. How should that change the way you live?

## **2: The Temptation**

Scripture: Matthew 4:1-11

- Directly after his Baptism, Jesus is led by the Holy Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan. During this time of temptation, Jesus models great fortitude and virtue, responding to the taunts of the enemy with boldness and the Word of God.
- Even Jesus, the Son of God, was tempted. Yet he shows us how to remain faithful to God in the midst of temptation. Rather than be allured by the passing things of the world and his own desires, he remains firmly fixed on his mission and confident in his identity as God's Son. (CCC 539)

Journaling Question: What can you learn from Jesus' example of rebuking the enemy in the face of temptation? How can you draw from his example when you are tempted to fall into sin?

### **3: The Calling of the Disciples**

Scripture: Matthew 4:18-22

- Jesus calls the first disciples — Simon Peter, Andrew, James, and John — while they are fishing. They leave everything behind and follow him.
- Jesus continues to call more of the disciples to himself throughout his public ministry — men and women of various walks of life and professions.
- Jesus' life and teaching are attractive. They draw people to him. He calls 12 men in particular to follow him closely, teaching and healing in his name. These are the 12 Apostles.

Discussion Question: If Jesus walked into the room right now and asked you to follow him, would you do it? What would you have a hard time leaving behind in order to follow him?

### **4: The Wedding at Cana**

Scripture: John 2:1-11

- The first public miracle of Jesus takes place at the wedding at Cana, where he turns water into wine.
- Mary encourages her Son that the time to begin his ministry has come. Jesus shows us what abundance looks like in the midst of scarcity.
- In the Old Testament, God spoke about his relationship with his people in terms of a marriage. He also promised that he would provide abundant wine — itself a symbol of life and abundance — for his people. It is fitting that Jesus' first public miracle, which inaugurates his public ministry as the Messiah, involves providing an abundance of wine at a wedding. (Isaiah 25:6, Isaiah 62:4-5, Hosea 2:16-20)

Reflection Question: What does this miracle tell you about Jesus?

### **5: The Sermon on the Mount**

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-12

- The prime example of Jesus' teaching is found in the Sermon on the Mount. It is a cohesive summary of many of Jesus' main teachings. There are three major teachings of the Sermon on the Mount:

- The Beatitudes: You are blessed even in the midst of suffering.
  - Our Father: It is essential to live in a relationship with God the Father and make prayer a priority.
  - The Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated.
- The Sermon on the Mount summarizes Jesus' proclamation on the Kingdom of heaven. It offers the major moral code of the life of a disciple. In this most essential event of Jesus' public preaching, we learn what we should hope for through the Beatitudes, how to pray through the "Our Father," and the standard for how to treat others through the Golden Rule.
  - The Sermon on the Mount helps us see the world through God's eyes. The poor are proclaimed to be blessed, the old law is expounded, and everything seems upside down in the Kingdom.
  - The Sermon on the Mount is the outline of life for those who want to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. It teaches how we ought to live.

Reflection Question: Which of the three major teachings of the Sermon on the Mount mentioned is most challenging to you?

- The Beatitudes: You are blessed even in the midst of suffering.
- Our Father: It is essential to live in a relationship with God the Father and make prayer a priority.
- The Golden Rule: Treat others as you would like to be treated.

## **6: Preaching in Parables**

Scripture: Luke 8:4-8

- In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus taught in parables, stories that used imagery familiar to the people, making them easy to understand. There are over 30 parables that Jesus taught. Common images he used were sheep, the growing of grain and plants, marriage, and kingdoms. There are no parables in the Gospel of John
- These images were not only familiar to people, but they also drew on the history of the people of Israel and the writings of the Old Testament. Jesus shows that he continues what God has been doing throughout history.
- Parables give us a chance to see ourselves in the story and consider where we might need to grow. Some of the most well-known parables of Jesus are the Prodigal Son, the Good

Samaritan, mustard seed, pearl of great price, the Lost Sheep, lost coin, wicked tenants, fig tree, ten virgins, and the Sowing of Seeds. (CCC 546)

Discussion Question: Which of Jesus' parables is the most memorable to you? Why does the message of that parable stick with you?

## **7: Miracles, Healings and Exorcisms**

Scripture: Mark 1:21-28

- Jesus shows that he truly is the Son of God by healing those in need and casting out demons to give the afflicted freedom.
- These miracles show that Jesus, while fully human, is also fully divine, and point to his divine power and divine life. They are intended to foster faith in him and shower God's blessings on his people. (CCC 548)
- Jesus' authority over nature, illness, demons, and even death reveals who is truly worthy of our trust and adoration. God is in control of everything, and he alone should be revered as the Lord of all. (CCC 547, CCC 550)

Discussion Question: Which of the healings or exorcisms that Jesus performs in his public ministry impacts you the most? What does that reveal about who he is?

## **8: Transfiguration**

Scripture: Matthew 17:1-8

- Jesus takes Peter, James, and John up a high mountain and is transfigured before them, revealing his divine glory.
- Moses and Elijah, significant prophets of the Old Testament, appear alongside Jesus. These figures signify the law (Moses) and the prophets (Elijah), showing that they lead to Jesus, but he is superior to them.
- This occurrence takes place after Peter's declaration that Jesus is the Christ and confirms that Peter's insight is true: Jesus is the Messiah.
- Jesus' transfiguration is a glimpse of his glory. However, we don't really understand this glory until after the Passion, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus. Through these events, we come to know what it means to call Jesus Messiah. He saves us from sin and death by his own offering on the cross. His glory is manifest in the power and selflessness of his love.

Discussion Question: How do you see God's glory around you?

## **9: Entry to Jerusalem**

Scripture: Mark 11:1-10

- Jesus triumphantly enters Jerusalem riding a donkey, welcomed into the city by the crowds waving palm branches and spreading out a path before him.
- This is a moment of great excitement and importance. The people are proclaiming that Jesus is the one who comes to establish the kingdom promised to David. In other words, he is the Messiah who is expected to usher in a new kingdom. Riding on a donkey harkens back to King Solomon, who rode a donkey through the streets of Jerusalem as he was declared king. (2 Samuel 7:12-16, 1 Kings 1:38-40)
- In just a few days, these crowds will go from celebrating Jesus to condemning him.

Discussion Question: Like the crowds on Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, when is it easy and fun to participate in the practice of your faith? Like the disciples during the crucifixion of Jesus, when does it take great courage to stand firm in your faith?

## **10: Institution of the Eucharist**

Scripture: Luke 22:14-20

- At the Last Supper, Jesus takes bread and wine, says the words of blessing, and institutes the Eucharist. He will fully offer himself for us on the Cross, living out the words spoken the night before.
- When he establishes the Eucharist, Jesus commands his followers to do the same thing in remembrance of him. We fulfill this command every time we celebrate Mass.
- The Eucharist is a memorial of Jesus' Body and Blood offered for us on the Cross. Here, we see the truth about the Messiah. He has come as an offering for all of us. Through him, we are strengthened and restored in our relationship with God. The King is willing to die for his people.

Discussion Question: How can you be more attentive to the presence of Jesus in the Eucharist?

Conclusion

- C.S. Lewis popularized a famous argument that we essentially have three options for how we respond to Jesus' public ministry. We can conclude that he is a liar who intentionally deceived people about his identity. We can assume that he was a lunatic who had lost his mind. Or, we can believe that he truly is who he claimed to be — the Son of God.

- Jesus' ministry leads us to a fork in the path where we must choose to either walk with him as his disciple or to reject who he claimed to be. The path with the Lord leads to a real, full, and authentic life. Alternatively, the path of disbelief leads to a drab and colorless life that results ultimately in death apart from the one who loved and created us. (John 10:10)
- We either follow him as his disciples or reject who he claimed to be. There is no in-between. The choice is ours to make. He's blazed a trail for us, the only question is: will you follow?

In the Gospel of John, Jesus miraculously feeds a large crowd with just a few loaves of bread and some fish. The crowds later come to him again seeking food, and he speaks to them of a different bread that he offers. Jesus tells the crowd gathered that he is the Bread of Life and says to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you." (John 6:53)

After hearing this teaching, many started having doubts and questioning Jesus, saying, "This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?" In response, Jesus clearly stated who he was and insisted on the importance of belief in him. Even so, many of those who followed him left and went their own ways. (John 6:60)

Jesus then looked at his twelve disciples and asked if they, too, would leave him. Peter offered a reply that we should contemplate often: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:68-69)

Jesus' life demands a response from us. We can walk away like the crowds because his words are confusing and demanding. Or, like Peter, we can follow him, knowing that there is no one else to turn to who has the words of eternal life.

Jesus calls each of us to make a personal decision: either to trust him or to turn away from him. If we truly believe he has the words of eternal life, then we need to follow him with all our hearts and guard against the other voices that try to steal our devotion and attention away from him. Take a moment in quiet prayer, honestly asking Jesus to help you live as his disciple. Think about what things in your life compete with your devotion to Jesus. What other voices, ideas, or distractions beckon you to follow them instead of him? Take a few moments to ask the Lord to show us what is in your heart.

After a few minutes of silence to reflect, close in prayer: *Jesus, You are the Son of God, and you have the words of eternal life. There is no one and nothing we can turn to that can replace you. Help us draw close to you and choose the way of discipleship, even when faced with distraction, doubts, or discouragement. Give us the grace to trust that you are always blazing a trail and leading us for your glory and our good. Amen.*