

2021 DEVOTIONAL

Holy Week & Easter



MCLEAN
PRESBYTERIAN



CAPITAL
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FAIRFAX

INTRODUCTION

Around 2000 years ago, a man rode into the city of Jerusalem on a donkey. Crowds gathered to watch him and many greeted him with cries of “Hosanna!” This man went on to spend the week confronting economic exploitation in the Jewish Temple, telling stories to religious and political leaders, having his feet washed by a prostitute, and eating dinner with his friends. Toward the end of the week, this man was arrested and put on trial before Jewish and Roman authorities. He was pronounced guilty and was crucified. For a day, all was quiet. His body was placed in a tomb and his followers mourned his death.

These events - ranging from the mundane to the unusual to the horrifically violent - are remembered and celebrated every year by followers of this man. These events are celebrated because the story did not end the day after the man was crucified. Days after the body of the man was laid in the tomb, a group of frightened and brave women went to visit it. As they walked, they fretted among themselves, “Who will roll the stone away from the mouth of the tomb?” To their astonishment, confusion, and delight, the women found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty. The man who had died was alive!

Around 500 years ago (1500 years after the events briefly recounted), a group of men who believed these stories wrote something called the Heidelberg Catechism. Their goal was to answer some questions that many believers had. The very first question they asked and answered was this: “What is your only comfort in life and in death?” The answer immediately followed: “That I am not my own, but belong - body and soul, in life and in death - to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ.”

Remembering this story is an exercise of hope. We are indeed a people in need of hope, of restoration. In remembering our faithful Savior Jesus, our souls are restored.

USING THIS DEVOTIONAL

This devotional will take you through Palm Sunday, March 28 to Sunday, April 11. It is divided into two parts. Part One covers the events of Holy Week, stretching from Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday. Part Two wrestles with the implications of the resurrection from Monday, April 5 through Sunday, April 11. Easter Sunday is the ‘hinge’ connecting the two parts together.

Each day, there will be a passage of Scripture for you to read and meditate on, plus a suggested song from our series playlist. We recommend that you read the Scripture and then listen to the song. From there, you will find either a reflection, devotional questions, a poem, or a piece of art - sometimes, you’ll have a combination of these elements. On the three Sundays in this devotional, you will find that there is only a Scripture passage and a song. This is intentional. We encourage you to join the Capital Pres Family in worship, whether in-person or via our livestream. After meditating on the appointed Scripture for that day, bring your whole self to worship the man who is our only hope in life and death.

Incorporating reflection on visual and poetic arts might not be a part of your typical devotional plan. In this devotional, we encourage you to read the Scripture passage and then let your attention wander over the corresponding poem or artwork. Within the poetry, look for themes that connect back to the passage. Perhaps read the poem out loud and give yourself time to enjoy it. With the visual art, notice the colors and objects in the painting. How do they relate to the Scripture passage for that day? How does it enable you to visualize the passage in a different way?

We are including these different elements because we believe grasping the hope that is ours in Christ takes more than just our intellectual assent and more than just the affections of our hearts. To grasp the hope of Jesus, we must move toward him with our whole selves. This is part of the reason why Jesus said the greatest command is to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. This devotional is an attempt to embody that command. We hope you’ll join us.

TIPS FOR SKEPTICS OR NEW BELIEVERS

If you are still exploring faith or recently started following Jesus, here are some pointers to help you get the most out of this devotional:

1. **Don't feel intimidated!** The goal is meeting with God, not checking boxes. This resource is meant to help you, not confuse you. If time is an issue, break up each devotional into smaller parts to complete it throughout the day.
2. **Allow the Bible to speak for itself.** Read the passages multiple times. Look them up in the Bible and read them in their wider context.
3. **Use this resource in community.** Ask a friend or another Christian you know to walk through this devotional with you.
4. **Pray that God would become more real to you.** God listens to our prayers, and this is one he is delighted to answer!

TIPS FOR FAMILY DEVOTIONS

If you are working through this devotional as a family, here are some ways you can get everyone involved:

1. **Give each person responsibility.** Divide the devotional material among your family - someone reads the Scripture passage, another the poem, etc. Listen to the song together and encourage kids to move as they feel led! God put the wiggle in them!
2. **Create symbols.** Kids are often visual learners. As a family, draw a picture of the Scripture story for that day.
3. **Set a regular time.** It is best to have a set time to do this devotional every day. Whether at the start of the day before everyone begins their work, or at the dinner table, strive to be consistent in doing this devotional together.

A large, leafy tree with white blossoms stands in a green field. The tree is the central focus, with its branches spreading out. The field is lush green with some yellow wildflowers. In the background, there are rolling hills under a clear sky. The entire image has a soft, greenish tint.

Holy Week

SUNDAY, MARCH 28

John 12:12-36

The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

*"Fear not, daughter of Zion;
behold, your king is coming,
sitting on a donkey's colt!"*

His disciples did not understand these things at first, but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things had been written about him and had been done to him. The crowd that had been with him when he called Lazarus out of the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to bear witness. The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, "You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the world has gone after him."

Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus." Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him."

"Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again." [29] The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to him." Jesus answered, "This voice has come for your sake, not mine. Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out. And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself." He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, "We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you

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say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.

LISTEN:

“All Glory, Laud, and Honor”



Click Here!

Join our church family in corporate worship today.

MONDAY, MARCH 29

Matthew 21:12-17

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers."

And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple, and he healed them. But when the chief priests and the scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying out in the temple, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant, and they said to him, "Do you hear what these are saying?" And Jesus said to them, "Yes; have you never read,

*"Out of the mouth of infants and nursing babies
you have prepared praise?"*

And leaving them, he went out of the city to Bethany and lodged there.

LISTEN:

"Be Thou My Vision"



QUESTIONS

1. Spend a few moments thinking of Jesus. How do you describe him? What words come most easily to mind?
2. The passage records Jesus' interactions with three groups of people. Who are the three groups? How does Jesus respond to each? Why do you think his responses differ?
3. Read Isaiah 56:1-8. Jesus quotes this passage in verse 13 of our passage today. What does this passage reveal about the character of God and the ministry of Jesus? How were the actions of the money-changers antithetical to the Isaiah passage?
4. What is the role of children in this passage? What do the children recognize that the chief priests and scribes do not?

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PRAY

God our Father, you are great and greatly to be praised. Reveal to me the areas in my life that love money and material gain. Help my eyes to see you, and may my heart be joined to those of the children who called out “Hosanna to the Son of David!” Make my praise genuine and restore to me the joy of your salvation. Amen.

TUESDAY, MARCH 30

Matthew 21:28-46

“What do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir,’ but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?” They said, “The first.” Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.

“Hear another parable. There was a master of a house who planted a vineyard and put a fence around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower and leased it to tenants, and went into another country. When the season for fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the tenants to get his fruit. And the tenants took his servants and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first. And they did the same to them. Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.’ And they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.”

Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures:

*“The stone that the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
this was the Lord’s doing,
and it is marvelous in our eyes”*

Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruits. And the one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and when it falls on anyone, it will crush him.”

When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them. And although they were seeking to arrest him, they feared the crowds, because they held him to be a prophet.

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LISTEN:
"All Glory Be Forever"



REFLECTION

By Emery Lambert, Church Member

Our reading today takes place during Jesus' second day teaching in the temple in Jerusalem. While he is teaching, the chief priests and the elders approach him and ask, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" (Matthew 21:23). Jesus does not answer their question, but instead responds with the two parables we are reading today.

I am always tempted, when reading interactions like this between Jesus and the religious leaders of his time, to read Jesus as combative. After all, that's how I would respond to these not-so-subtle attacks. This time, however, I noticed that his questions aren't simply rhetorical to drive home his point. He is really expecting an answer. Our passage even starts with his asking, "What do you think?"

Verses 40 and 41 reminded me of the prophet Nathan being sent to David in 2 Samuel 12. Just as David hears the parable and condemns the rich man who took the poor man's lamb, the priests and elders condemn the tenants who would not send the fruit to the master of the vineyard. In David's case, he recognizes his own sin against Uriah in the story and responds by saying, "I have sinned against the LORD," and is reassured by Nathan that, "The LORD also has put away your sin" (2 Samuel 12:13). Jesus' questions in today's passage are the same invitation to experience repentance and forgiveness.

This is very good news for me! Just like the priests and elders, I often act like I know better than God how I should live my life. Like the tenants in the parable, I want to keep the fruit of my labor for myself rather than return it to God for his glory. I want to have power over how I spend my time and my money. I want to be part of building God's kingdom, but I bristle when that might mean stepping outside my comfort zone. What a blessing to know that in the midst of my selfishness and pride, God continues to patiently engage with me to bring me to repentance and back into relationship with him!

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The religious leaders did not respond with repentance, instead doubling down on their plot to silence Jesus. As we are engaging with the story of Jesus' approach to the cross this Holy Week, are we responding like the priests and elders - blinded to his invitation by our own sinful pride? I know I want to respond like David did by seeing and repenting of the many ways that I reject the authority of God in my life and in the world.

Facing our sin can be difficult. After all, the tenants in the parable will be put to death and we know from Romans 6 that the wages of all sin is the same. However, because God sent his own son to take on that punishment, we can acknowledge and repent of our sin with confidence, remembering that this story ends in Easter. We can accept the invitation of Jesus to see our sinfulness more clearly with the assurance that we are forgiven.



“He Changed His Mind and Went” (2021)

Jennifer Church
Church Member

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31

Mark 14:1-11

It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him, for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money. And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

LISTEN:
"A Woman"

**QUESTIONS**

1. Jesus did and said many unexpected things. In this passage, what stands out as 'unexpected'?
2. Reflect on the response of the people in verses 4 and 5. Would you have reacted similarly? Why or why not?
3. Read again the words of Jesus in verses 6-9. What do they reveal about Jesus and his purpose? What is surprising in these words?
4. See how Judas responded in verses 10 and 11. How does this passage give insight into the motivations of Judas? How does this passage also create empathy for Judas? Do you see yourself more in Jesus or in Judas in this passage?

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PRAY

God of extravagance, passages like this unsettle us. Right when we think we have you figured out, you reveal more of yourself and you surprise us. Your ways are indeed not our ways, nor are your thoughts our thoughts. Increase our self-awareness and convict us of our low view of Jesus. Create in us a humility in our approach to you. Remind us of your beauty and transcendence. Amen.



**"She Has Done a
Beautiful Thing"**
(2021)
Jennifer Church
Church Member

Maundy Thursday
THURSDAY, APRIL 1

John 16:16-24

“A little while, and you will see me no longer; and again a little while, and you will see me.” So some of his disciples said to one another, “What is this that he says to us, ‘A little while, and you will not see me, and again a little while, and you will see me’; and, ‘because I am going to the Father?’” So they were saying, “What does he mean by ‘a little while’? We do not know what he is talking about.” Jesus knew that they wanted to ask him, so he said to them, “Is this what you are asking yourselves, what I meant by saying, ‘A little while and you will not see me, and again a little while and you will see me’? Truly, truly, I say to you, you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice. You will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will turn into joy. When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world. So also you have sorrow now, but I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you. In that day you will ask nothing of me. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you ask of the Father in my name, he will give it to you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

LISTEN:

“Come to Me”



REFLECTION

By Rachel Kettle, Church Member

In April of 2020, I gave birth to my first child, Adeline. Afterwards, I was not sure I ever wanted to go through that experience again.

For me, the journey of childbearing, giving birth, and recovery felt long and difficult. I spent most of my pregnancy in a challenging environment and job overseas, with intense sickness. At 32 weeks we flew back to the USA, right before the COVID-19 shut-down. After months of sleeplessness, stress, sickness, and pain, I was ready for this baby to arrive. When labor finally came, I was hoping it would be quick (and that I would be in that small percentage of blessed women who do not even feel their contractions). This was not to be. After nearly a day

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and a half of labor (luckily, with pain relief) and two hours of pushing, they told me I needed an emergency c-section because she was stuck. I was resolved not to cry, but instead I vomited on the way to the operating room. After they cut me open and pulled her out, it was silent. Those moments dragged. When she did finally cry, my husband and I both cried, **tears of relief and tears of joy!** But, the anguish of childbirth did not immediately dissolve as they wheeled me out, baby in arms. Post-partum recovery from a massive surgery while going through hormone changes and trying to keep a jaundiced and reflux-y baby alive, on extraordinarily little sleep, was overwhelming.

So *how* do people do this again and again?

Other moms told me that you “forget” the sickness, pain, and exhaustion, and that your hormones are wired this way. Up until last month, I did not believe them.

And then it happened. A year and a half after that positive test, I finally thought, maybe someday I would want to have another baby. For me, it was not only seeing my daughter in her first moments of life that dimmed the pain, but also seeing her grow, laugh, and play. Seeing the light in her eyes and the joy of ‘a human being ...born into the world.’ Memories of the pain faded, like the scar on my abdomen. In this passage Jesus says, “When a woman is giving birth, she has sorrow because her hour has come, but when she has delivered the baby, she no longer remembers the anguish, for joy that a human being has been born into the world.” He uses this analogy to prepare his disciples for his death and his resurrection. He tells his disciples, and ‘You will weep and lament,’ and ‘have sorrow now.’

Anguish was *expected*.

The sorrow the disciples experienced witnessing the death of Jesus must have been excruciating, but not more excruciating than the pain Jesus himself went through. I would also guess that every day between Good Friday and Easter Sunday dragged out slowly in a stunned, mournful haze, in which they felt they were barely surviving.

But it was not the end.

On Easter, the disciples saw Christ resurrected. What mind-blowing, overwhelming joy they must have felt to see him alive! I wonder how they felt when they realized that the pain of his death was not in vain but rather, like childbirth, it was *pain that gave life*.

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Christ's resurrection is the ultimate transformation of sorrow, pain, and waiting, turning into deep and lasting joy.

As for us, we live in a period of expectation. We also can expect to suffer as we continue to experience sin, sickness, and sorrow in our broken world and our fallible bodies. And that journey may feel much longer and more difficult than we would like. And yet, we know that this will end.

We too will finally see Jesus face to face. All the anguish will *truly* be forgotten, not only dimmed, and the joy will be forever.



"The Last Supper" (ca. 1325-30)

Uggolino da Siena

Robert Lehman Collection, 1975, Public Domain

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“suffering, a sonogram” (2021)

Delaney Young

2020-2021 Capital Fellow

what is birth besides the sharp, heavy things you bear
coming out beautiful and bright and, wide-eyed, living?
it is grace that stomps on the walls of our wombs, warps
and wounds the autonomous norm, weighs heavy on us,
waiting to arrive in postured deliberate liberation.

what is being born in the sickening, unsung quiet of today:
dependence; an eye for the beauty of weakness; attention.
our labor is not in brain but soul, where grows the epiphany
that there is metamorphic potential in our sweat and gashes.
nothing can be born without its mother bearing it.

in every being’s suffering, a sonogram.
newness hurdles out of the ache.
in every being’s suffering, a sonogram.
our strength does rise as we wait.

Good Friday
FRIDAY, APRIL 2

Luke 23:32-43

Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him. And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments. And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!" The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine and saying, "If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!" There was also an inscription over him, "This is the King of the Jews."

One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, "Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other rebuked him, saying, "Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."

LISTEN:

"O Sacred Neck, Now Wounded"



REFLECTION

By Russell Galloway, Church Member

If you've lived in Fairfax County, I hope your relationship with the Fairfax County Water Authority has been as good as mine. Daily, they purify and pump, and I pay and sip. Do you remember in the Old Testament when Moses struck two separate rocks to give water to the thirsty Israelites? In the first episode (Exodus 17), Moses struck once, according to God's command. In the second episode (Numbers 20), Moses struck twice, contrary to God's command—which had called Moses to just speak to the rock. Despite Moses giving blasphemous, vainglorious additional taps in episode 2, God still gave abundant water to his thirsty Israel. Best of all, this water was free to the Israelites, requiring neither service fees nor quarterly bills!

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Overall, how many times did God command Moses to strike the rock? The first strike “unlocked the rock” and was a full, perfect, and sufficient blow for water to freely flow. This is why Moses could have simply spoken a soft word of power to subsequent rocks. Even though God forgives, sin still has consequences on earth; God saw Moses’ additional blows in episode 2 and rightfully disqualified Moses from leading Israel into the Promised Land. As you may remember, God handed the reins over to Joshua (read: “Yeshua”...), who would eventually lead God’s people into the Promised Land.



“Nativity Church Station No 12” (2002)

Laura James

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Throughout Scripture, Jesus is spoken of as a rock (1 Cor. 10:4). Naturally, these Old Testament stories call to mind today’s reading wherein King Jesus, our Rock and Redeemer, gets struck.

Today’s reading is gruesome. We see a 33-year-old Jewish man suffering crucifixion under Pontius Pilate. We see rulers, Roman soldiers, and Criminal #1 deride Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews. Yet, as the sheep of his pasture, we remember the full story. Put your finger on v. 43, where Jesus Christ, the greater “Yeshua,” is shown powerful to lead Criminal #2 into Paradise. As Joshua/ Yeshua has hinted, Jesus is the way into Paradise everlasting. In order to avoid Hell and receive forgiveness for sin, we must follow the example of Criminal #2. If you have not already, ask Jesus to remember your name in his heart so that you, too, may worship and work for Jesus in eternal Paradise.

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I'm grateful that today's passage offers insight into the heart of Jesus. Facing his enemies, the King prays with sincerity: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Do you hear? This forgiveness is for you. Struck in the desert, the first rock poured forth water to the Israelites, and then to the nations. Struck at Golgotha, the Rock of our Salvation, Jesus Christ, pours forth fountains which forgive the sin of the world and bring life even unto the Dead Sea (Ezek. 47). Even one drop of his forgiveness shall lift shame, pardon guilt, and engender life in your dead places.

Furthermore, Jesus offers these waters of forgiveness broadly, far beyond the contrite Criminal #2. Rather than exclusively offering forgiveness to his fan club, such as Zechariah, Simeon, or his Mom (who had all blessed Jesus with some amazing songs earlier in Luke's Gospel), Jesus Christ offers a wide forgiveness even unto the angry rulers, the mean Roman soldiers, and the obdurate Criminal #1. What other message empowers us to extend forgiveness to people, institutions, or systems which might have trespassed against us?

I still owe the FCWA a quarterly bill. But, because Jesus offered up his body and blood on the cross, his waters of forgiveness are free. He pays, we sip.

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“Good Friday” (1866)

Christina Rosetti

Public Domain

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy blood’s slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon –
I, only I.

Yet give not o’er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

SATURDAY, APRIL 3

Matthew 27:57-61, Mark 15:42-47, Luke 23:50-56, John 19:38-42

Today is Holy Saturday. On the next page, you'll find the four accounts of the burial of Jesus. Read through them. Recognize the magnitude of what each of these accounts are communicating. Allow yourself to sit in the solemnity and silence of such a day as this, a day when the Author of Life lay dead in a tomb. Experience the uncertainty, the unease. After reading the four accounts, spend some time in silence. Today's poem is written from the perspective of one of the disciples following the death of Jesus (but seemingly before the resurrection).

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When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. (Matthew 27:57-61)

And when evening had come, since it was the day of Preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a respected member of the council, who was also himself looking for the kingdom of God, took courage and went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate was surprised to hear that he should have already died. And summoning the centurion, he asked him whether he was already dead. And when he learned from the centurion that he was dead, he granted the corpse to Joseph. And Joseph bought a linen shroud, and taking him down, wrapped him in the linen shroud and laid him in a tomb that had been cut out of the rock. And he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where he was laid. (Mark 15:42-47)

Now there was a man named Joseph, from the Jewish town of Arimathea. He was a member of the council, a good and righteous man, who had not consented to their decision and action; and he was looking for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then he took it down and wrapped it in a linen shroud and laid him in a tomb cut in stone, where no one had ever yet been laid. It was the day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was beginning. The women who had come with him from Galilee followed and saw the tomb and how his body was laid. Then they returned and prepared spices and ointments. On the Sabbath they rested according to the commandment. (Luke 23:50-56)

After these things Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him permission. So he came and took away his body. Nicodemus also, who earlier had come to Jesus by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds in weight. So they took the body of Jesus and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there. (John 19:38-42)

Continued on next page...

“Bartholomew: Disciple” (2020)

Jack Ridl, author of *Saint Peter and the Goldfinch*

The poem first appeared in Image Fall 2020, no. 106.

I never knew what was going on.

He would say, “Let’s go,” and we
would follow. “Follow” was his word.

And we would. Fools we were to let that
take us all that way. Why we did to this day

I don’t know. Look how it ended. Look
what it became. But what did we have

to stay for? Nothing. There wasn’t much
work. Nothing much to do. There were no

stories left. Bread. Fish. So we ended up
with more bread and fish. But we did find

stories and stories. Well, what else is there?
I never did much along the way. Look it up.

In the big deal painting I’m the one who appears
rather glassy eyed, and believe me, it wasn’t the wine.

I just went along. The miracles had been done before.
I will say, though, that it was his words. Words!

Imagine. Words had never done what his did.
I’d listen, and I wasn’t much of a listener. Then

later I would try to make sense of them. I couldn’t.
But I could feel them. And maybe that was it, how

they got inside you and made you wonder and wrinkle.
They got in my brain’s garden and made it seem like

the roots were above ground and all the flowers and
vegetables, all the nourishing, were now below.

Continued on next page...

He didn't reverse things, exactly—the first shall be last and the last first and all that. It was that everything

changed inside me when he said those things. It was what happened to me. I started looking at lepers and the poor

and paid no attention anymore to the kings and scribes and Pharisees. I had thought the world of them. Now they seemed

unimportant in their importance. See? See how hard it is to explain this stuff? You just started seeing everything with a

new mind. You began to be drawn to a whole new world, and it was a world. Like now. A world within a world, one

drawing you, the other imposing itself on you. Why am I telling you what you already know? Erosions. That's it.

The reversals were erosions. And in what was left, I wanted to plant what didn't belong. Lilies in fields.

You might say, okay, whatever, and yet those words did become flesh, my flesh. And my flesh, my body, held

the kingdom of God, and if it's a place that's a place for children, then most of what I know really doesn't matter.

Labor doesn't, and money, and reason, and, well, you go make a list. He'd get me so confused. And then we'd

head off worrying about how we would eat and where we'd sleep. Our feet were filthy. My God, we were always

filthy. We stank. And then he'd go and point at birds or stalks of grain, even stop and have us kneel before a flower,

and then he'd smile. That haunts me still. That smile. And then he died. He brought out hate, not love. He had

a terrifying sense of justice. Nothing he said or did was impossible. Maybe that was it. It was all possible.

A large, leafy tree with dense green foliage stands in a field of tall grass. The word "Easter" is overlaid in white text on the tree's trunk. The background shows rolling hills under a clear sky.

Easter

Easter Sunday
SUNDAY, APRIL 4

Matthew 28:1-10

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you." So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. And behold, Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me."

LISTEN:
"Living Hope"



Join our church family in corporate worship today – Happy Easter!

Continued on next page...



“Mary Magdalene” (2013)

James B. Janknegt

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A large, spreading tree with dense white blossoms stands in a green field. The tree's branches are thick and dark, contrasting with the bright white flowers. The field is filled with tall green grass and small yellow wildflowers. In the background, there are rolling hills under a clear blue sky. The entire image has a light blue overlay.

Implications of the Resurrection

MONDAY, APRIL 5

1 Corinthians 15:12-28

Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified about God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” But when it says, “all things are put in subjection,” it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all.

LISTEN: “Christ Is Risen”



REFLECTION

By Joe Palekas, Pastoral Intern

Death's power comes from its permanence. It is irreversible, irrevocable, final. “It is finished,” Jesus said. Then he died. In death, the heart stops beating, the lungs stop breathing, the eyes stop seeing. Death is the end.

Until it isn't. Scattered throughout the pages of Scripture, there are mini-reversals of what is supposed to be irreversible. In a town called Zarephath, the death of a widow's son was reversed by Elijah (1 Kings 17). Later, a woman in the town of

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Shunem had the death of her son reversed by Elisha (2 Kings 4). A man named Jairus received word that his daughter had died, only to have her death reversed (Mark 5). A pair of sisters, Mary and Martha, experienced the death of their brother after the only man who could have saved him delayed in his coming. When Jesus finally arrived, Lazarus was dead and buried. After weeping over him, Jesus spoke, and the death of Lazarus was revoked (John 11).

And yet, death revisited each of these resurrected ones. Although death was temporarily suspended for them, it came again in all of its brutal, overwhelming, disgusting permanence. Death is the end.

Until it isn't. Jesus certainly died. "It is finished," Jesus said. Then he died. Then, he lived again. Death, it seems, was unable to claim the man who proclaimed, "I am the resurrection and the life." You see, until Jesus, every person who experienced a reversal of death was acted upon by someone else. The widow's son experienced reversal from the hand of Elijah, the son of the Shunammite woman from Elisha. Both Lazarus and Jairus' daughter were brought from death to life by Jesus. Resurrection had to come from someone else.

Not so with Jesus. Remember his words: "I am the resurrection and the life." If this isn't true, Jesus is finished. He is ended. His death, too, is irreversible. This is what the apostle Paul is claiming in the passage today. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." If Jesus is not the resurrection, you who place your faith in him are pitiable, wretched, without lasting hope. For if Christ is our hope for this life only, our hope will end when death takes us.

Hear the hope of verse 20 of our passage. Jesus has in fact been raised from the dead. The one who is resurrection was indeed resurrected. In his resurrection, death was defeated. The power of death is its permanence. This power was stripped from death when the heart of Jesus began to beat again, when his lungs began to inflate again, when his eyes opened once again.

The story of Jairus' daughter in Mark 5 is instructive. When Jesus arrived at the home of the dead girl, he told those mourning that she was merely sleeping. In their shock and anguish, they let loose a bitter, hopeless laugh. Jesus was employing a metaphor. For the one who is the resurrection and the life, death is like a nap. It is suddenly impermanent, reversible, temporary. Paul says that Jesus is the firstfruits of those who, like the girl in Mark 5, have fallen asleep. The hope of every Christian is that death has lost its permanence. For those who know Jesus, the last enemy is defeated. The once permanent death is a mere interruption between life and life.

Luke 24:1-12

◆◆◆◆◆ “Christ is Risen. He is Risen Indeed” ◆◆◆◆◆

“Christ is Risen, He is Risen Indeed”



1. Can you imagine the emotions of the women as they walked to the tomb of Jesus? Reflect on your own experiences of grief and loss.
2. Consider verses 5-7. What hope do you find in these words?
3. Spend some time studying the artwork that accompanies today's passage. What details from the passage does the artwork highlight?
4. Reflect on your own listening habits. What makes you likely to listen to someone? To believe what someone is telling you? What might you learn from this passage?

Continued on next page...

PRAY

Lord of Life, we confess that we are quick to dismiss that which we deem unlikely. In the case of your resurrection, this places us among the disciples, rather than with the three women who saw and believed. Today, give us compassionate ears. Teach us to listen well, that we might receive your grace from and extend your grace to those who are speaking. Amen.



“An Idle Tale” (2013)

Michael Cook

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“Easter Morn”

Josephine Delphine Henderson Heard
in *“Morning Glories”*, 1890; *Public Domain*

Lo! the glorious dawn is breaking,
 And the night of gloom is gone,
All the earth from slumber waking,
 Hails with joy the Easter Morn!

Lo! the sun’s bright rays are peeping
 Over Calvary’s crimson height,
Soldier guards who watch were keeping,
 Saw Him rise in power and might!

Mary ran with footsteps fleeter,
 Than the other two who went -
Where an angel sat to greet her,
 And the grave a glory lent.

With their spices they were going,
 To the tomb where Jesus lay -
Faithful ones, without the knowing.
 Who should roll the stone away?

To the rich man’s new sepulchre,
 Mary’s eager feet drew near;
Lo, she saw the tomb was open,
 And her heart was filled with fear!

At the grave she stooped, and peeping,
 Angels saw in white arrayed,
Where her Lord was lately sleeping,
 “*And the clothes aside were laid!*”

Back she drew with fear and quaking,
 But the angel watcher said:
“Jesus is among the living,
 Seek Him not among the dead.”

Continued on next page...

“He is risen, He is risen,”
Now dispel thy gloom and fear
From the grave’s embrace and prison;
Rose triumphant, He is not here!

Then awake the song of gladness,
Let it float upon the air;
Joy dispels the gloom and sadness,
Past the night of dark despair.

Shout with gladdest acclamation,
Raise with joy the gladsome sound,
And with great acceleration,
Spread to earth’s remotest bound.

He is risen! great in glory;
Death is vanquished, lost its sting!
Vain the grave can boast of victory,
He is risen, Christ the King!

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 7

Romans 6:1-14

What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it? Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God. So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.

LISTEN:
“Empty Me Out”

**REFLECTION**

By Patrick Quinn, Church Member

I wonder if the prodigal son ever had nightmares of still being far off after he came home. I wonder if even years after his return—with a ring secured on his finger and robes, well-worn but still regal, hugging his renourished body—if he ever woke in the middle of the night scared and crying, remembering the terror of his reckless living. I wonder if he ever walked through his father’s house and,

Continued on next page...

passing a mirror, expected to see himself as emaciated, naked, desperate, empty, and alone rather than the well established and beloved prince he once again is. I wonder if that healthy reflection ever startled him.

Paul understands that coming from death to life is a hard transition for believers. Christianity comes with a sharp learning curve. Believers must come to terms with their own sinfulness, their utter inability to make themselves right with God, and their total dependence on the blood of Jesus to pay their debt. Justification by faith is not intuitive to a sinful world—not even to Israel, to whom it was a “stumbling stone” (Romans 9:30-33). Much like the prodigal son, we often approach God intending to contract ourselves as laborers so that we might pay off our debt. Paul goes to great lengths in Romans to explain the futility in such an approach, stating plainly in Romans 3:28, “For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law.”

In Romans 6, Paul begins to draw out the implications of justification by faith. He opens with a brilliant question: “Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” In other words, if grace truly abounds where sin increases, shouldn’t believers sin even more? Doesn’t it make sense to want “more grace”? His answer is simple, but profound. Christians have died to sin and have been raised to life in Jesus.

Our faith, signified and sealed by baptism, is not merely a declaration of what we believe. It changes us. Christians are no longer enslaved to follow sin’s demands—and they are demands. Elsewhere Paul describes sin as an evil inclination by which we willingly suppress the truth in unrighteousness, and also as a trespass against a holy God which warrants death. Here, Paul adds the sense in which sin is an oppressive force, a “dominion.” Under sin, one can do nothing but sin. Our union with Christ breaks our shackles. His resurrection is our liberation.

Continuing to sin would not result in more grace because Christians have already received grace in full. Rather, it would only feed the old self’s inclination to return slavery under sin, whether to earn salvation or to merely satiate its lusts—as if the prodigal son were to run away again, or to renegotiate servitude under his father. The resurrection secures the believer’s status as a beloved child of God. There is no greater grace for former prodigal sons and daughters.

This is why Paul exhorts his readers to “consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus” in Romans 6:11. The word “consider” denotes continuous, active self-reflection. Christianity comes with a sharp learning curve, and believers often forget their status as beloved children. Paul doesn’t want Christians to

Continued on next page...

remain in our nightmares of former sin, or to think of ourselves as still lost and desperate. We have not been left in our sin any more than Jesus has been left in the grave. Paul calls us to remember the resurrection because in Christ it is our resurrection, too.

“Again the Lord of Life and Light” (1773)

Anna Laetitia Barbauld

Public Domain

Again the Lord of Life and Light
Awakes the kindling ray,
Unseals the eyelids of the morn,
And pours increasing day.

O what a night was that which wrapt
The heathen world in gloom!
O what a sun, which broke this day
Triumphant from the tomb!

This day be grateful homage paid,
And loud hosannas sung;
Let gladness dwell in every heart,
And praise on every tongue.

Ten thousand differing lips shall join
To hail this welcome morn,
Which scatters blessings from its wings
To nations yet unborn.

The powers of darkness leagued in vain
To bind His Soul in death;
He shook their kingdom, when he fell,
With His expiring breath.

And now His conquering chariot wheels
Ascend the lofty skies;
While broke beneath His powerful cross
Death's iron sceptre lies.

Continued on next page...

Elated high at God's right hand,
The Lord of all below,
Through Him is pardoning love dispens'd,
And boundless blessings flow.

And still for erring guilty man
A Brother's pity flows;
And still His bleeding heart is touch'd
With memory of our woes.

To Thee, my Saviour and my King,
Glad homage let me give;
And stand prepared like Thee to die,
With thee that I may live!

THURSDAY, APRIL 8

John 20:1-18

Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that he must rise from the dead. Then the disciples went back to their homes.

But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb, and as she wept she stooped to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had lain, one at the head and one at the feet. They said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping?" She said to them, "They have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." Having said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?" Supposing him to be the gardener, she said to him, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have laid him, and I will take him away." Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" Mary Magdalene went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord"—and that he had said these things to her.

LISTEN:

"His Heart Beats"



Continued on next page...

QUESTIONS

1. Verses 1-10 recount the story of Peter and a beloved disciple seeing the tomb after Mary Magdalene told them it was empty. It ends with them going back to their homes. Mary stayed. Why? Consider Mary's thoughts and emotions as she stood by the empty tomb.
2. What details does this passage highlight that are not mentioned in the other accounts of the resurrection we've read?
3. Why do you think the author of this gospel highlights that Jesus appeared as a gardener? As you ponder this, consider the artwork for today.
4. Mary was commissioned as the first missionary - to go and announce Jesus' resurrection to his disciples. Why was his resurrection good news then? Why is it good news today? Who might you share that news with?

PRAY

Jesus our Resurrection, we celebrate the reality that you have conquered the grave. Help us to see your resurrection as an act of re-creation. By your resurrection, we are united to your eternal life. Help us to be messengers of this good news. By your Spirit, tune our hearts and minds to recognize opportunities to share this gospel. Amen.



“Christ Appears to Mary Magdalene on Easter Morning (Noli me tangere)” (1626)

Peter Paul Rubens and Jan Brueghel the Younger

Public Domain

FRIDAY, APRIL 9

Colossians 3:1-17

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

LISTEN:

“Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus”



Continued on next page...

REFLECTION

By Ashley Guinn Taylor, Director of Connections

The New City Catechism question #4 asks “How and why did God create us?” The response, “God created us ... to know him, love him, live with him, and glorify him. And it is right that we who were created by God should live to his glory” leads us right into Paul’s letter to the church at Colossae and Colossians 3:1-17. It was critical to Paul that this church know and understand God in his greatness and glory, rather than in the less-than view being peddled by false teachers in their midst and, in light of that truth, to live like they believed it. This message is critical for us too. We were created to live a life so closely intertwined with Jesus that our every moment, breath, and thought are “on the things above” (v. 1).

When you think ahead to your day or reflect on spent time, are your hopes and hindsights consumed by things of this finite earth and just briefly colored by the glory of an eternal life?

We are created and called to be preoccupied with Jesus - his existence, his mission, and his commands to us (v. 16), and that is why anything less than that standard is unsatisfying and leaves us longing for something. In the tangible today, being preoccupied with Jesus means our actions and motives look different than those around us (v. 17); they contradict what the world thinks is the right move. In the unknown tomorrow being preoccupied with Jesus looks like rest, marked by the hope and freedom that come from a promise that has no end.



“Colossians 3:14”

Jenny Lawrence

2020-2021 Capital Fellow

In this Easter season we are reminded of truths that are actually important all year long. Because of Jesus' resurrection, believers become part of a new humanity that's joined to him, and our lives are changed and transformed here on earth (v.3). Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, the person we used to be, before being adopted into the family of Christ, died with him - that person no longer exists. Paul knew that we needed some help recognizing "our old selves" and graciously gave us and the church at Colossae a glimpse at a transformed life (v. 5-17). Being preoccupied with Jesus in this fallen here-and-now takes action, and, while not easy, it will always satisfy. Shedding what is bleak and earthly, putting them away (v.5-9), is only half-way there. Living a transformed life means we also put on what is light and holy and embrace who God created us to be.

In this holy season, and really always, we should ask ourselves: Are we living a transformed life? Are we enticed by and preoccupied with what has been given and promised to us through Jesus? Jesus died so we can live new lives as citizens of his eternal kingdom. Are we living under the weight of a limited earthly life? Or are we living in the freedom Christ accomplished for us at the cross?

*Turn your eyes upon Jesus,
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.*

Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus - words by Helen Howarth Lemmel (1922)

SATURDAY, APRIL 10

1 Corinthians 15:50-58

I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?”

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

LISTEN:

“Jesus Is Alive”

**REFLECTION: “The Resurrection Changes Everything”**

By Matt Stone, Director of Missions

Are you sometimes struck with the thought that “Oh yeah, I’m going to die someday”? When I was younger this thought would strike me out of the blue and surprise me, but pretty quickly I would return to my daily existence, largely unaffected. As time has passed and I have aged these thoughts have become less of an abstraction and more a current reality. Suddenly it seems the Resurrection has more import. Why? Because the inescapable reality of death is closer as we get older. More on this later....

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In the passage referenced above, Paul is reminding us that we all die and we all are faced with reconciling our lives with the truth and reality of our perishability outside the work of the Gospel. “Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.” We are told that “Death is swallowed up in victory” for those that have placed their trust in Jesus.

As we consider this Easter season, it is critical that we remember these truths. Without a resurrected Christ, there is no Easter, no Christianity and no Good News. The reality is that Christ did rise from the dead and we are changed from the perishable to the imperishable when we die. That is really good news!

Now, let's return to the reality of our own mortality and that of those around us. If we love our neighbors, we will consider their fears and concerns about their future. We all share the same humanity and the natural worries and concerns that accompany our existence. The last part of our passage (vs 58) says, “Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” The work of the Lord referenced here is about advancing his Kingdom, laboring for Christ's sake. What does that labor consist of? Loving God with all our heart and loving our neighbors as ourselves (Mark 12:31). Easter can be a wonderful time of reflection and conversation with friends, family, and coworkers, particularly in this season of pandemic where the frailty of our health and very existence is on everyone's mind. Take a moment to think of others who might be contemplating their own mortality. The great comfort and joy of knowing Christ in this season of uncertainty and strife hopefully enables us to have something to say as we are “abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

Continued on next page...

“Thou Lovest Me”

Josephine Delphine Henderson Heard
in *“Morning Glories”*, 1890; Public Domain

Gracious Saviour let me make,
 Neither error or mistake -
Let me in Thy love abide,
 Ever near Thy riven side.

Let me, counting all things dross,
 Find my glory in the cross;
Let me daily with Thee talk,
 In Thy footsteps daily walk.

I would gladly follow Thee,
 For Thou gently leadest me,
Where the pastures green doth grow,
 Where the waters stillest flow.

For me is Thy table spread,
 And Thou doth anoint my head,
And my cup of joy o’erflows
 In the presence of my foes.

Matthew 28:16-20

Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

LISTEN:

◆◆◆◆◆ “Christ Our Hope in Life and Death” ◆◆◆◆◆



Join our church family in corporate worship today.



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