



# Tetelestai

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*A 40-Day Devotional  
to Prepare Our Hearts for Resurrection Sunday*  
HIGHLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH

Cover art by Avarae Meyer, age 14

# INTRODUCTION

I am excited about Highland Community Church's Resurrection-season devotional. It is designed for family usage and contains devotionals for all ages. Our sincere hope is that everyone can benefit and that families will read these devotionals together at breakfast, dinner, or prior to bed. We pray that this tool will enrich our appreciation for Jesus, His crucifixion, burial, and glorious resurrection. We also desire that this might be a tool that encourages families to be “in the Word” together.

Our devotional authors, from all 4 HCC campuses, include: a teenager, singles, husbands/wives, daughters/fathers, a daughter/mother, entire families, an extended family, 3 of Highland's missionaries, laity, staff and my 87-year-old dad. Each author is writing to a different audience: some styles are exegetical, others are devotional, some devos are aimed at our youngest family members, and a few are theologically stretching.

Our HCC artists include a 5-year-old, an 11-year-old, a gaggle of teens, 5 present/former art teachers, and an author-illustrator. The God-utilized talent is encouraging and inspiring. I was/am amazed at the included artwork—all of which encourages my heart to praise the Lord. Undoubtedly, it will encourage you as well.

May the richness of the Resurrection season spur us on to greater worship of our Lord!

*Jeffrey Hinds*  
Senior Pastor  
Highland Community Church  
2023

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## MENSAJE ESPECIAL A NUESTROS AMIGOS DE HABLA ESPAÑOL

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Mateo 27:50-52 (LBLA)  
Jorge y Stephany Santana

*<sup>50</sup>Y Jesús volvió a clamar a gran voz y entregó su espíritu. <sup>51</sup>Y he aquí, la cortina del templo se rasgó en dos, de arriba abajo. Y la tierra tembló, y las rocas se partieron. <sup>52</sup>También se abrieron los sepulcros. Y muchos cuerpos de los santos que se habían dormido fueron resucitados*

Uno de los momentos más oscuros en la vida de los discípulos y de los seguidores de Jesús fue cuando lo vieron morir en la cruz, en este momento a pesar de haber escuchado al Señor hablar de su resurrección muchos vieron toda la esperanza que se les había prometido terminada, su salvador había muerto, La idea del Cristo muerto a manos de sus enemigos iba totalmente en contra de sus expectativas, pero la Biblia nos enseña que no esto no fue un acto de derrota o que su grito de muerte fue hecho por un hombre moribundo que no sabía qué decía, al contrario, este fue el paso a su victoria y el medio de la derrota del enemigo, 1 Corintios 15:57 (LBLA): ***“pero a Dios gracias, que nos da la victoria por medio de nuestro Señor Jesucristo.”*** lo que indudablemente trajo a nosotros libertad y salvación, Mateo nos dice que Jesús exclamo con gran voz y Juan declara que en sus últimas palabras declaro que su misión había sido terminada con éxito.

Los acontecimientos de su muerte, indican que Cristo nos ha redimido; A través de la muerte de Jesús no solo se abrió el camino para nuestra salvación, sino que también se nos abrieron las puertas para una comunicación y un acercamiento a Dios como nunca antes había existido. Los sepulcros fueron abiertos en señal de su poder sobre la muerte por lo que podemos decir que tenemos la garantía de que su salvación está asegurada y de que la oscuridad en nuestra vida no prevalecerá, hoy su sacrificio sigue haciendo efectos de transformación en nuestras vidas, no solo proveyendo el camino al padre sino también dándonos valor para vivir una vida de fe y llena de esperanza de que le servimos a un Dios poderoso que a sin importar lo que este pasando El esta en total control de lo que sucede y que tiene un plan de victoria para sus hijos.

¡Hoy es un buen día para recordar que Jesús murió para darnos vida y esperanza!

*Señor agradecemos tu sacrificio, ayúdanos a acercarnos confiadamente a ti cada día, a mantener viva la esperanza de que tienes control de cada situación de nuestras vidas y a poner nuestra esperanza en el futuro eterno que tienes preparado para nosotros. Gracias por salvarnos, por redimirnos del pecado y darnos vida eterna a través de tu muerte en la cruz. Amen.*

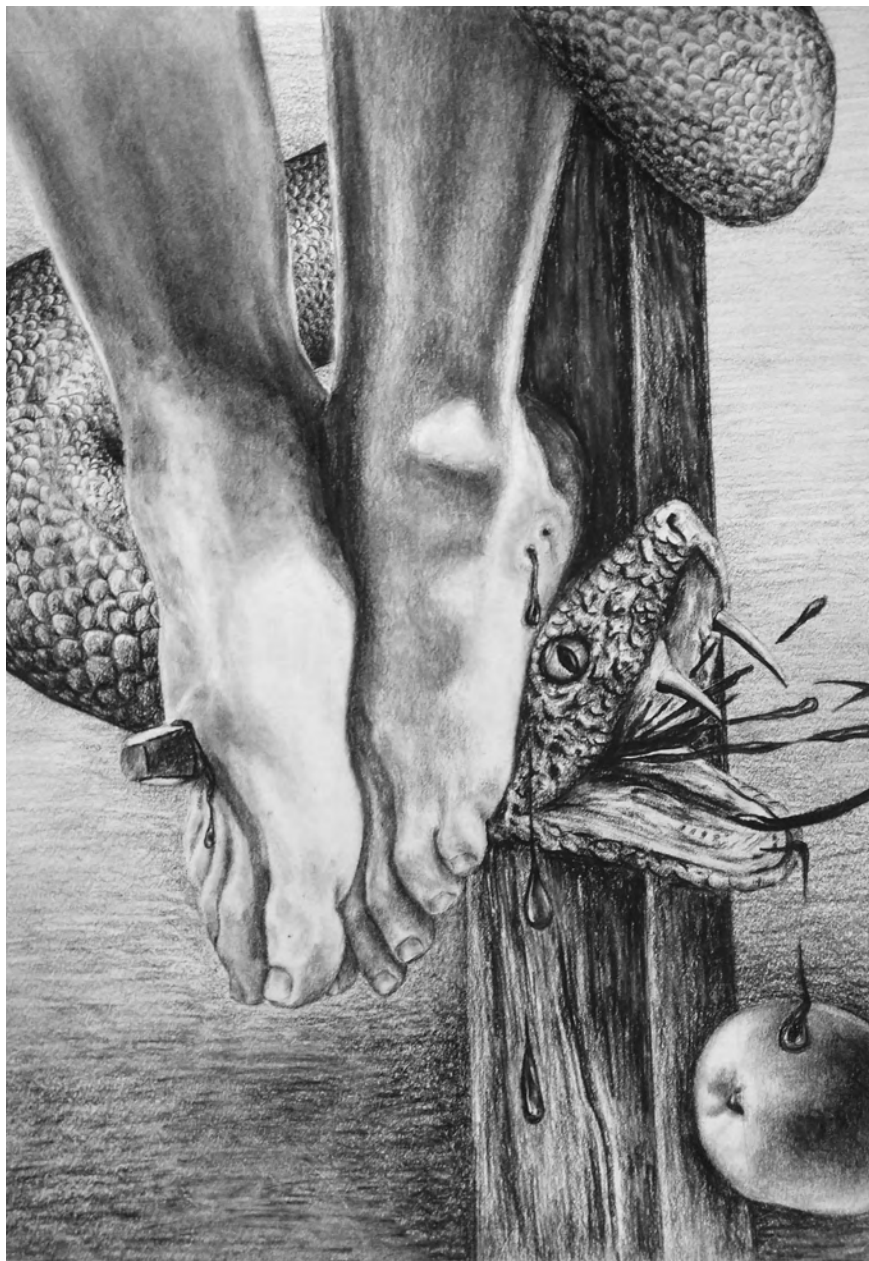
*<sup>50</sup>And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit. <sup>51</sup>And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised*

Seeing Jesus die on the cross was surely one of the darkest moments in the lives of Jesus's disciples and followers. At that moment, despite having heard the Lord speak of His resurrection many times, all the hope that had been promised to them temporarily vanished. Their Savior had died, and they were struck with fear and confusion. The mere idea of the Promised Messiah dying at the hands of His enemies contradicted their expectations. Yet, the Bible teaches us that this was not an unanticipated event in God's plan or that Jesus's cry at death represented His defeat. On the contrary, this represented His ultimate victory. His death was the means of defeating the enemy once and for all. 1 Corinthians 15:57: *"But thank God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."* This victory brought us freedom and salvation. Both Matthew and John tell us that Jesus declared in His final words with a loud voice that His mission had been completed.

The events of Jesus's death demonstrate how Christ has redeemed us. Through the atoning work of Jesus on the cross, not only was the way of salvation opened, but also the door was opened for us to enjoy a deeper intimacy and relationship with the Lord than ever before. After His death, the graves were opened as a sign of His power over death. This reminds us that we have the guarantee that His atoning work was successful and that darkness in our lives will not prevail. Today, His sacrifice continues to provide transformative effects in our lives. It not only provides the only way to the Father, but it also gives us the courage to live a life of faith and hope. We serve a powerful God who is in total control of what happens, and He has a victorious plan for all of His children. Therefore, we need not fear when trials come!

Today is a good day to meditate on the reality that Jesus died to give us life and hope!

*Lord, we are grateful for Your sacrifice. Help us to come confidently to You, to keep alive the hope that You are in control of every situation in our lives, and to put our hope in the eternal future You have prepared for us. Thank You for saving us, redeeming us from sin, and giving us eternal life through Your death on the cross. Amen.*



Annie Bafort  
"Genesis 3:15"

*‘When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to His disciples, <sup>2</sup>“You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”<sup>3</sup>Then the chief priest and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, <sup>4</sup>and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill Him. <sup>5</sup>But they said, “Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people.”*

What sayings? The sayings of the Olivet Discourse on the end times, including Matthew 25:31: *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory... He will sit on His glorious throne.”* This was the news all of Israel wanted to hear! Deliverance from the Romans... NOW! But political deliverance was not God’s plan.

Jesus then tried to prepare His disciples for the inevitable event that would soon unfold. **BUT FIRST**, *“the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”* Before He would reign as King, He had to go to the cross. Little did they know His coming in power and glory would not happen for over 2,000 years.

At the same time, the chief priests and elders were plotting to arrest Jesus and have Him killed *“by stealth.”* Their plan had to be carried out secretly to avoid upsetting the people on their feast day. They thought they were in control!

Ironically, Jesus was meanwhile predicting both the day and the method of His execution. Jesus, being fully God, knew how everything would unfold in His perfect timing. Were the “plotters” in charge? No! God would use them to carry out His plan of redemption, established before the foundation of the world. Jesus’s crucifixion on Passover was no coincidence. He was the once-and-for-all Passover Lamb, the only One who could take away the sin of the world.

We look forward to celebrating the resurrection and eventual reign of Jesus, **BUT FIRST**, we must take time to prepare our hearts, remembering and reflecting on the suffering of Christ. He chose to submit to the cross, obedient to the Father’s sovereign plan. He did it for us!

# DAY 2

Matthew 26:6-13 (ESV)  
Pastor Sam & Hannah DeLoye

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*“Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, <sup>7</sup>a woman came up to Him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on His head as He reclined at table. <sup>8</sup>And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, “Why this waste? <sup>9</sup>For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor.” <sup>10</sup>But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to Me. <sup>11</sup>For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have Me. <sup>12</sup>In pouring this ointment on My body, she has done it to prepare Me for burial. <sup>13</sup>Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her.”*

Imagine this scene. Jesus is within days of His trial and crucifixion. He and His disciples are staying in Bethany, right under the nose of the religious leaders. Only Jesus knows what’s about to transpire—the disciples are oblivious that He’s about to go to the cross.

What occurs next is truly unthinkable. Right after the evening meal concludes, an unnamed woman breaks a jar of expensive perfume and pours it on Jesus’s head. As the fragrance of the expensive oil fills the house, you could hear a pin drop around the table. Instead of joining in this act of worship, the disciples are indignant because they want the money. While she offers Jesus the gift that a King deserves, they see an opportunity to fund their ministry work or bless the poor. A three-year, 13-man mission trip isn’t cheap!

What prompts this woman to offer such a gift? Certainly, the Holy Spirit. With no way of knowing what was about to happen, she obeys the leading of the Spirit, pouring upon Jesus what was undoubtedly her most expensive possession and family heirloom. In a single moment, she makes the greatest sacrifice of her entire life.

Jesus quickly corrects the perspective of the disciples with high praise for this woman, because she did a beautiful thing. The disciples had too low a view of Jesus, while this woman worshiped Him as her Creator and Savior.

Our sacrifice of worship only makes sense when we consider the sacrifice of Christ. Do we sacrifice for Jesus like this woman, or like the disciples? Is our worship costly or cheap? Is our suffering Savior of greater worth to us than anything money can buy? May Jesus become greater and greater in our hearts, and may we become less and less.



<sup>14</sup>*Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests*  
<sup>15</sup>*and said, “What will you give me if I deliver Him over to you?” And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup>And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray Him.*

Nearly everywhere Judas Iscariot is mentioned in the Bible, he is identified as “the betrayer.” Because of this, it’s sometimes easy to forget that Judas was one of the twelve disciples Jesus had handpicked. When Jesus predicted that one of the disciples would betray Him, no one suspected Judas (Matthew 26:21-22). Yet something caused him to go to the chief priests, solicit money, and actively look for a strategic time to double-cross Jesus.

Why did he do this? He certainly had a problem with greed (John 12:6). But after spending years following Jesus, it’s hard to understand why he would have betrayed Christ—and for such a small amount. Thirty pieces of silver was probably a month’s worth of wages, but it was considerably less than the alabaster flask (worth a year’s wages) that the woman used to anoint Jesus (Matthew 26:6-13). Perhaps Judas had become disillusioned by Jesus’s teachings. Maybe he was disappointed that Jesus wasn’t going to physically overthrow the Roman government. Regardless, he watched Jesus perform miracles, heard Him teach, experienced His love, and still betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver.

Every few months it seems we hear of another influential Christian renouncing their faith. Like Judas, these are people who have seen God work, yet, for whatever reason, they abandon their faith to seek something that seems more attractive.

Let us not be distracted by money. Let us not be disillusioned by our own desires and expectations. May our faith always be in the One who is able to “*sympathize with our weaknesses*” and who “*in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15).

*Lord, give us the strength to say “no” to temptation and “yes” to You. When we do fail, forgive us, and make our hearts not merely remorseful like Judas’s (Matthew 27:3-5) but repentant like Peter’s. Amen.*



# DAY 4

Matthew 26:17-25 (ESV)

Vicky Baker

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*<sup>17</sup>Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will You have us prepare for You to eat the Passover?” <sup>18</sup>He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.’” <sup>19</sup>And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. <sup>20</sup>When it was evening, He reclined at table with the twelve. <sup>21</sup>And as they were eating, He said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” <sup>22</sup>And they were very sorrowful and began to say to Him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” <sup>23</sup>He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with Me will betray Me. <sup>24</sup>The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” <sup>25</sup>Judas, who would betray Him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”*

For many of us, days just fly by as we live our busy lives. People work at their jobs, parents shuttle kids from one place to another, and kids focus on homework so they can go out and play. In our busy, goal-focused lives, it's easy to miss recognizing a special moment before it's gone. Sometimes we miss the moment altogether.

Matthew 26:17-25 was a passage I had read before. The disciples go find a place for Jesus and His followers to celebrate the Passover. I'm not Jewish, so that was just a Jewish holiday to me, something we might read quickly on our way through to get to the “good stuff” (like the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection). In my hurry, I missed the beauty of THIS moment.

Passover, the Jewish celebration of God saving Israel from slavery in Egypt, is now about to take on a more profound meaning. During THIS Passover, God is going to save ALL who choose Him from their slavery to sin and death—everywhere and for all time. This is one of those very special moments that we don't want to miss—the moment when God's plan came together so that His people could finally be free, once and for all.

Jesus gives hints to His disciples (and to us) in this passage—“*My time is at hand*,” “*one of you will betray Me*,” and “*the Son of Man goes as it is written*.” Jesus tries to get us to see the beautiful symbolism of His changing the Passover feast, from a celebration of one act of God for a few people, to the full expression of God's love for all people.

Let's take time to recognize this moment: the Passover where Jesus became the Lamb whose blood let judgment pass us by. This Passover made it possible

for us to be free from sin, once and for all, so that we can be reconciled to God forever.

*Dear Lord, thank You for Your beautiful expression of love for us. Help us to slow down and see with Your eyes the special moments of life as they occur.*



*Lilia Bizjak, age 16*

# DAY 5

Matthew 26:26-29 (ESV)  
Clay Stebbins & Jody Hettinga

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*<sup>26</sup>Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” <sup>27</sup>And He took a cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup>for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup>I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.”*

What is it you reflect upon as you sit in church and participate in the Lord’s supper? Do you look to the past, the present, or the future? Maybe all of them?

In the Old Testament days, the priest had to enter the Holy of Holies and present a sacrifice every year to deal with his own sin and the sin of the people. Years later there was the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. By His death and resurrection, Jesus took care of our sins once and for all (Matthew 20:28, Romans 5:8). There is no need to repeat the sacrifice as was done prior to Jesus. All we have to do is trust in Him as Lord and Savior, and we will be free of our iniquities (Romans 10:9-10). What a positive truth to apply to our lives in this Lenten season as we look with excitement to eternity in heaven! We are free indeed and have a great message for the rest of humanity. The next time you take communion, remember what Christ did for you and also look forward with anticipation!

*Dear Father, may I remember the sacrifice Your Son made as I take the bread and the cup, and may I look forward to the result of this precious gift.*

*<sup>30</sup>And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. <sup>31</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “You will all fall away because of Me this night. For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.’ <sup>32</sup>But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.” <sup>33</sup>Peter answered Him, “Though they all fall away because of You, I will never fall away.” <sup>34</sup>Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” <sup>35</sup>Peter said to Him, “Even if I must die with You, I will not deny You!” And all the disciples said the same.*

As the disciples sang a hymn, it must have been a somber gathering following Christ's Last Supper. Peter and the others expressed with great emotion their allegiance to Jesus during His upcoming suffering. But Jesus clearly told them, and Peter specifically, they would fall away, even deny Him. Today, these words of Jesus to His disciples are Scripture to us, but they were, in fact, also Scripture to them. In the moment, the disciples were hearing God's Word but struggling to believe it could be true. They were choosing their allegiance to Jesus over their faith in Jesus.

But Jesus taught that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). The Apostle Paul later recognized that our best efforts and intentions can't be sustained, no matter how strongly we believe or desire them (Romans 7:23-25).

Although the disciples lived out the Scriptures while they occurred, we have the completed Scriptures in our Bible. The Bible gives us today the same message Jesus gave His disciples in this passage. But unlike the disciples on that challenging night, do we trust it for our individual situation? Do you recognize that God works for your good as you love Him (Romans 8:28a) even if He moves differently from your plans? Does your life reflect the call to His purpose (Romans 8:28b)?

Let us combine the emotion of Peter's allegiance to Jesus with the faith to trust God's Word as we live out His call. If your future is uncertain, imagine the impact on those around you from your emotional expression of loyalty to Christ while also displaying your faith in the promises of Scripture. Jesus had called His listeners to *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”* (Matthew 22:37). He continues this call of passionate faith today.

# DAY 7

Matthew 26:36–46 (ESV)

JB & Hannah Chadwick

*<sup>36</sup>Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” <sup>37</sup>And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup>Then He said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with Me.” <sup>39</sup>And going a little farther He fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.” <sup>40</sup>And He came to the disciples and found them sleeping. And He said to Peter, “So, could you not watch with Me one hour? <sup>41</sup>Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” <sup>42</sup>Again, for the second time, He went away and prayed, “My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, Your will be done.” <sup>43</sup>And again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. <sup>44</sup>So, leaving them again, He went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words again. <sup>45</sup>Then He came to the disciples and said to them, “Sleep and take your rest later on. See, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>46</sup>Rise, let us be going; see, My betrayer is at hand.”*

His public ministry complete, a song from the Hallel ending His quiet Passover dinner with His disciples, the betrayal in motion, and His intimate knowledge of all it meant our Lord departed to a place He frequented with His disciples to pray (John 18:2). It was here the weight and the sorrow of what was to transpire in a few hours was felt. Three times He went to the Father; three times He asked that, if possible, the cup of the impending cross could pass. Three times He humbly and obediently added “*not as I will, but as You will.*” He who emptied Himself of glory and took on human form, He who knew no sin, became the final and complete Passover Lamb and took on our sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

When I consider the Gethsemane prayer of our Lord, I am reminded of Philippians 2:8, “*And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*” If we are to truly grasp this “humble obedience” of our Lord, we ought to view it through the sorrow, prayer, and obedience that He experienced in Gethsemane. Because of this humble obedience in Gethsemane, we have Philippians 2:9–11, “*Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name that is above every name, so that the at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*” Amen!

*<sup>47</sup>While He was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. <sup>48</sup>Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, “The One I will kiss is the Man; seize Him.” <sup>49</sup>And he came up to Jesus at once and said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” And he kissed Him. <sup>50</sup>Jesus said to him, “Friend, do what you came to do.” Then they came up and laid hands on Jesus and seized him. <sup>51</sup>And behold, one of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. <sup>52</sup>Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. <sup>53</sup>Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once send Me more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup>But how then should the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must be so?” <sup>55</sup>At that hour Jesus said to the crowds, “Have you come out as against a robber, with swords and clubs to capture Me? Day after day I sat in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. <sup>56</sup>But all this has taken place that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.” Then all the disciples left Him and fled.*

Judas had walked by Jesus’s side for three years, seen countless miracles, and heard the Gospel of the Kingdom of God explained from Jesus’s own lips. Yet, for thirty pieces of silver, he was ready to betray Him. When he led a crowd carrying swords and clubs out to Gethsemane, Judas addressed Jesus as “Rabbi,” just like he had during their Passover meal together, while the other disciples had called him “Lord.” Despite everything he had witnessed, Judas resisted letting Jesus into his heart.

I have walked in the light of Jesus’s words all of my life. I have received countless miraculous blessings from God. I have heard the Gospel of the Kingdom of God faithfully proclaimed by His servants. Yet my heart still sometimes betrays Jesus to the gods of my reputation, my bank account, and my lusts. Just like Judas, I have sometimes resisted calling Jesus “Lord.”

Jesus knew exactly what Judas intended. He knew that Judas’s kiss was meant to betray Him to the mob sent out by the chief priests. He knew that this betrayal would cost Him His life. And still, Jesus called Judas “Friend.” Fully knowing my treachery, Jesus still calls me “friend” too.

Jesus told His disciples and us, *“Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you.”* (John 15:13-14) Jesus suffered and died for all people, offering us His friendship and eternal life if we put our faith in Him alone as Savior and Lord.

*Jesus, Savior, by Your grace, give us Your Holy Spirit, so that in our hearts, we will call You “Lord!”*

# DAY 9

Matthew 26:57–64 (ESV)

Anonymous

*<sup>57</sup>Then those who had seized Jesus led Him to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had gathered. <sup>58</sup>And Peter was following Him at a distance, as far as the courtyard of the high priest, and going inside he sat with the guards to see the end. <sup>59</sup>Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put Him to death, “but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward”<sup>60</sup> and said, “This Man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’”<sup>62</sup>And the high priest stood up and said, “Have You no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against You?”<sup>63</sup>But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to Him, “I adjure You by the living God, tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God.”<sup>64</sup>Jesus said to him, “You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”*

Jesus stood quietly before Caiaphas (the high priest) and the Sanhedrin as they falsely accused Him of fraudulent crimes in a phony trial. Caiaphas and these ‘religious leaders’ had allowed Satan to consume their hearts, and the only thing they wanted was for Jesus to be gone—forever! Jesus knew the hearts of His accusers, yet He stood silent—this was divine wisdom on display.

When Jesus finally spoke, He did so without anger or condemnation, but with supreme authority—divine power on display. Caiaphas, in a fit of anger, tore his robes and accused Jesus of blasphemy! Jesus, however, responded once again in silence—divine peace on display.

Christ’s supreme desire has always been to do the will of the Father; this is clearly seen in this portion of His Passion. Even while being reviled and persecuted, He gave us a glimpse of His devotion to His Father and His deep love for His people. His humble strength in the face of evil displays this for us to see.

In response to this powerful truth, there are a few action steps we can take. Step 1: Invite Him into your heart. Step 2: Give God the glory. Step 3: Live a confident, abundant life in Christ.



<sup>69</sup>Now Peter was sitting outside in the courtyard. And a servant girl came up to him and said, “You also were with Jesus the Galilean.” <sup>70</sup>But he denied it before them all, saying, “I do not know what you mean.” <sup>71</sup>And when he went out to the entrance, another servant girl saw him, and she said to the bystanders, “This man was with Jesus of Nazareth.” <sup>72</sup>And again he denied it with an oath: “I do not know the Man.” <sup>73</sup>After a little while the bystanders came up and said to Peter, “Certainly you too are one of them, for your accent betrays you.” <sup>74</sup>Then he began to invoke a curse on himself and to swear, “I do not know the Man.” And immediately the rooster crowed. <sup>75</sup>And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times.” And he went out and wept bitterly.

After Peter denied Jesus three times, he quickly felt remorse over his actions. While I do not recall ever purposely denying Christ, there were times when I felt remorse for my actions as a Christian—more precisely, my inactions.

Once I became a believer, my relationship with Jesus Christ flourished; my knowledge of the Bible grew, and I met fellow believers who encouraged me. Each day was a new adventure walking with the Lord, yet something was missing in my Christian walk.

Jesus commissioned us, telling us to proclaim the gospel to the whole world. Psalm 96:3 tells us, “*Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples!*” Frankly, I had done neither.

It was the passage in James 1:22 that changed my mindset: “*But be doers of the Word and not just hearers.*” What was missing in my life was an active proclamation of my faith. Psalm 118:24 became another life-changing verse: “*This is the day the LORD has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it.*” Winter, spring, summer, or fall, I now actively proclaim that verse; during telephone conversations, at our Men’s Bible Study, over conversations with friends and family, and yes, even when meeting a total stranger. I also carry Christian tracts and Bibles to share with people I meet.

The Latin phrase carpe diem encourages me to “seize the day.” Equipped with Psalm 118:24, Christian tracts, and Bibles, I now go forth each day prepared to proclaim the gospel and declare His glory.

Unlike Peter’s denial of knowing Jesus, let us boldly declare that we belong to Him, and that He is the Way of salvation to all who believe.

# DAY 11

Matthew 27:1-10 (ESV)

Jim & Dagmar Nelson

*<sup>1</sup>When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put Him to death. <sup>2</sup>And they bound Him and led Him away and delivered Him over to Pilate the governor. <sup>3</sup>Then when Judas, His betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he changed his mind and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, <sup>4</sup>saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." They said, "What is that to us? See to it yourself." <sup>5</sup>And throwing down the pieces of silver into the temple, he departed, and he went and hanged himself. <sup>6</sup>But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since it is blood money." <sup>7</sup>So they took counsel and bought with them the potter's field as a burial place for strangers. <sup>8</sup>Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. <sup>9</sup>Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him on whom a price had been set by some of the sons of Israel, <sup>10</sup>and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me."*

How tragic was Judas's demise! Once Judas witnessed Jesus's unjust conviction, he immediately regretted his betrayal. However, it was too late. He attempted to return the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and elders, but they were unmoved. When Satan entices us to commit sin, he uses all kinds of sweet talk to deceive us. Even after we sin and start feeling conviction, the devil does not relent. Instead, he will unsympathetically accuse us, just like the chief priests did.

Satan's goal is to make us live in a state of regret and feel like it's too late.

May God give us a keen heart. In every opportunity, let us grasp the blessings of the forgiveness God gives us, so that we will not live in a state of regret. Judas regretted his betrayal, and he went out and hanged himself. That wrong decision brought a sad ending to his life. In contrast, may God give us wisdom to walk with Him every day. Let us resist all temptations from the enemy and experience God's blessings, grace, and forgiveness!

*Lord, may Your Holy Spirit help us not to live in a state of regret. Let us experience Your mercy and blessing whenever we turn back to You. Help us to live our lives daily for You. I thank you, and I pray in the victorious name of Jesus, amen!*

*"Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?'" Jesus said, "You have said so."<sup>12</sup> But when He was accused by the chief priests and elders, He gave no answer. <sup>13</sup>Then Pilate said to Him, "Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?" <sup>14</sup>But He gave him no answer, not even to a single charge, so that the governor was greatly amazed.*

While watching a movie for a second time, do you find yourself wanting to prevent something bad you know is about to happen? "No, don't go into the attic alone. Just run out of the house!" I find myself reacting similarly to this passage: "Jesus, I know how this goes. Speak up!" As always, Jesus knows far better than my gut-level reactions.

Jesus is in the courtroom. He's on trial, with His life on the line. Why doesn't He defend Himself? Is He stumped? Overwhelmed? Frazzled? No, He's resolute. The ultimate purpose of His life is before Him. This was the way—the bloody, shameful cross where He would bear the sin of the world. His silence took extreme biting of the tongue. He could have turned the tables on His accusers. He knew the sins and foolishness of every person in that room. Instead, He let them verbally rip Him apart with lies and false testimonies, without opening His mouth.

How often do I defend myself but lose focus on my purpose? To make sure I'm seen as right, I neglect demonstrating love. I get caught up in ensuring my point of view is understood while forgetting to be compassionate. Can you relate?

The discipline of tongue-biting could not have been modeled better. Yes, there are times when it is appropriate to explain our intentions and perspectives. Jesus models that in many other places. But in the courtroom, He's not letting Himself get in the way of what's ahead. Jesus had fully entrusted the Calvary path to His Father. Though given numerous opportunities (courtroom included) to walk an alternative path, He remained resolute in His Gethsemane decision to obey the will of the Father, even at the ultimate cost of His own life.



Linda DeBroux  
"Living Hope"

<sup>15</sup>Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to release for the crowd any one prisoner whom they wanted. <sup>16</sup>And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. <sup>17</sup>So when they had gathered, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" <sup>18</sup>For he knew that it was out of envy that they had delivered Him up. <sup>19</sup>Besides, while he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent word to him, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man, for I have suffered much because of Him today in a dream." <sup>20</sup>Now the chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowd to ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus. <sup>21</sup>The governor again said to them, "Which of the two do you want me to release for you?" And they said, "Barabbas." <sup>22</sup>Pilate said to them, "Then what shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?" They all said, "Let Him be crucified!" <sup>23</sup>And he said, "Why? What evil has He done?" But they shouted all the more, "Let Him be crucified!"

I was reading Matthew 27:15-23, and it tells an account about a man called Barabbas. The account about Barabbas is told in all four gospels, and together they tell us about the character of the man. The passage says that he was a "notorious prisoner." The Gospels of Mark and Luke point out that he was a murderer. The Gospel of John adds that Barabbas was an insurrectionist. For his crimes, Barabbas was destined to be crucified. However, the crowd asked that Barabbas be set free and that Jesus would be crucified in his place.

As I looked at the passage, it seemed like I was looking in the mirror. Do you know how you look in the mirror and see your image? Well, it was kind of like that, but as I looked at what happened, I didn't see Barabbas as Barabbas; I saw myself as Barabbas. In this account, I was Barabbas. I was the one that deserved to die for the sins I committed because the Bible states in Romans 6:23 that "*the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

I, like Barabbas, was destined to die for what I have done. But Jesus took my place and suffered and died for me, and I was set free. What a beautiful picture of the redemption we have when we accept the free gift of eternal life offered to us: Jesus took our place!

# DAY 14

Matthew 27:24-26 (ESV)

Jeana Clark

*<sup>24</sup>So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing, but rather that a riot was beginning, he took water and washed his hands before the crowd, saying, “I am innocent of this Man’s blood; see to it yourselves.” <sup>25</sup>And all the people answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!” <sup>26</sup>Then he released for them Barabbas, and having scourged Jesus, delivered Him to be crucified.*

Picture Pilate, acting here as both judge and jury—a heavy weight for one man to carry. Through inquiry, Pilate becomes convinced that the accused before him, Jesus, is innocent of any charges warranting death. Despite his certainty, Pilate grows increasingly concerned about the clamoring Jewish mob loudly demanding crucifixion. One of Pilate’s primary jobs as governor was to quell unrest swiftly and definitively. In desperation, Pilate tries to convince the crowd that they would rather see Jesus released than the violent criminal, Barabbas. When that does not work, Pilate sends Jesus to be savagely beaten (John 19:1). The crowd, however, is not pacified. Finally, weighing one Man’s life against the threat of rebellion, Pilate acquiesces to the mob.

Then Pilate washes his hands of the matter... as if the guilt of sending an innocent man to His execution could be washed away with mere water! Placing the blame on the angry crowd of Jews, Pilate declares, *“I am innocent of this Man’s blood.”* How ironic that the only source of true absolution for Pilate’s sin was the blood of the very Man he was wrongfully executing! Hebrews 9:22 tells us that *“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”* Righteousness only comes from Jesus’s self-sacrifice. *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”* (1 Peter 3:18).

*Lord, let us come before You, knowing that only by the sacrifice of Your Son can we receive forgiveness of sin. He was innocent of all charges, yet He was willing to bear “our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness”* (1 Peter 2:24). Enable us to live righteously as Jesus lived. Amen.

*<sup>27</sup>Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the governor's headquarters, and they gathered the whole battalion before Him. <sup>28</sup>And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him, <sup>29</sup>and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on His head and put a reed in His right hand. And kneeling before Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" <sup>30</sup>And they spit on Him and took the reed and struck Him on the head. <sup>31</sup>And when they had mocked Him, they stripped Him of the robe and put His own clothes on Him and led Him away to crucify Him.*

During the passion week, we hear much about Jesus's crucifixion. It was a horrific way to be executed! These verses are difficult to read because of what the Romans did to our Lord prior to His crucifixion. He was more than executed; He was humiliated. The Lord had endured the agony in the garden; was bullied and beaten by the Sanhedrin; and was marched to Pilate, then to Herod, then back to Pilate. He survived the scourging. By now, His body must have been throbbing with pain.

Then Jesus was brought into the Praetorium, crowded with 600 Roman soldiers. There they removed His clothing and began mocking Him. They put on Him a scarlet robe, which was clothing for a king, placed a crown of thorns on His head, and gave Him a staff for a "scepter." They knelt before Him and mocked Him saying, "*Hail, King of the Jews!*" He was further degraded as they spit on Him and struck Him on the head again and again with the staff.

Unknown to them, their actions fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy, "*His appearance was marred more than any man*" (Isaiah 52:14 NASB1995). Yet, He silently bore this unjust treatment, submitting to the will of His Father (1 Peter 2:23). A word of command ended the abuse, and Roman discipline took over. The Lord's own seamless robe was thrown over His shoulders, and the order was given to march Him to Calvary.

We may never be crucified, but if we stand for our faith, we can be sure we will be mocked, humiliated, called all kinds of names, and treated unjustly. But there is no place to hide, nor should we.

Much like the Roman soldiers, our culture will lie about something, then normalize their lie, then celebrate the lie in a way that shames anyone who does not embrace it. We may face humiliation from things like this, but remember that Christ is our great example!



# DAY 16

Matthew 27:32-44 (ESV)  
Pastor Andrew & Megan Gutherlet

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*<sup>32</sup>As they went out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. They compelled this man to carry His cross. <sup>33</sup>And when they came to a place called Golgotha (which means Place of a Skull), <sup>34</sup>they offered Him wine to drink, mixed with gall, but when He tasted it, He would not drink it. <sup>35</sup>And when they had crucified Him, they divided His garments among them by casting lots. <sup>36</sup>Then they sat down and kept watch over Him there. <sup>37</sup>And over His head they put the charge against Him, which read, “This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.” <sup>38</sup>Then two robbers were crucified with Him, one on the right and one on the left. <sup>39</sup>And those who passed by derided Him, wagging their heads <sup>40</sup>and saying, “You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” <sup>41</sup>So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked Him, saying, <sup>42</sup>“He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in Him. <sup>43</sup>He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, ‘I am the Son of God.’” <sup>44</sup>And the robbers who were crucified with Him also reviled Him in the same way.*

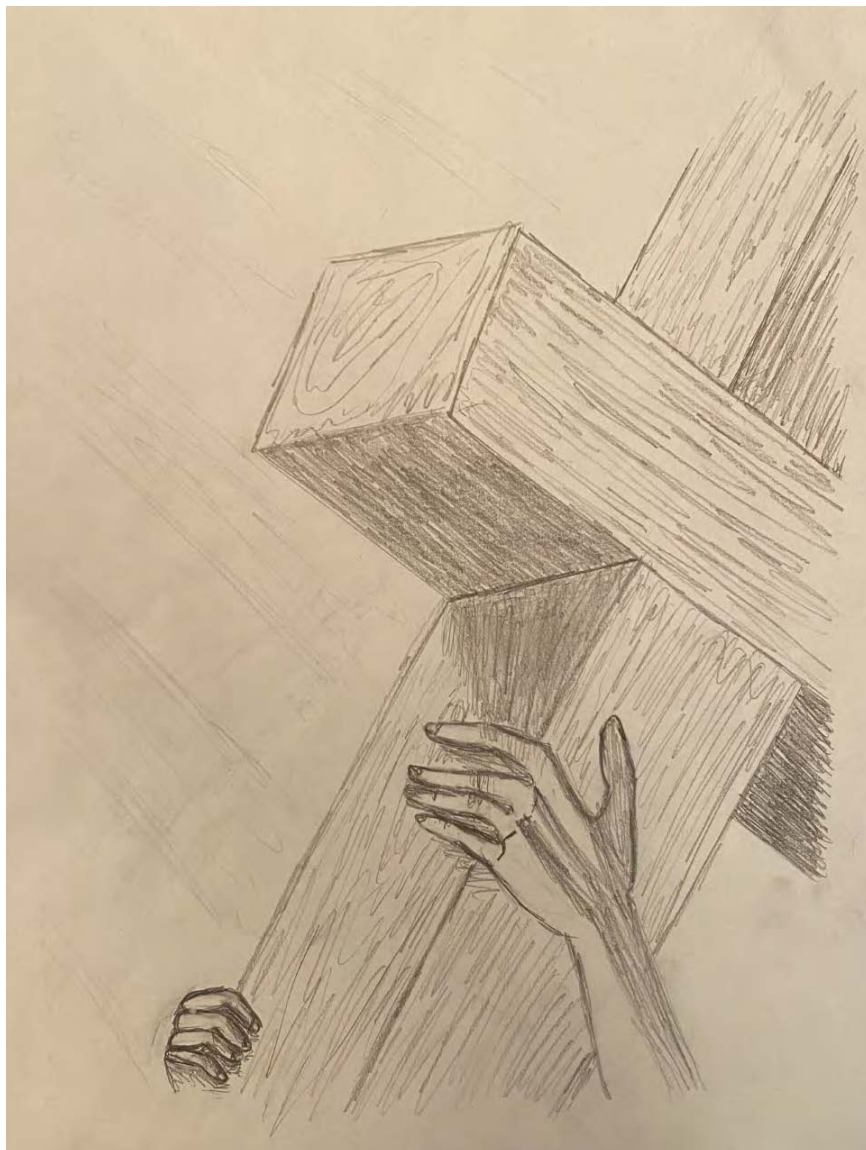
In Matthew 27, the sufferings that Jesus experienced as He atoned for the sins of the world reached their apex. In these verses, we see Jesus endure physical exhaustion, excruciating pain, public humiliation, and utter rejection. After enduring multiple floggings, Jesus was too exhausted to carry His cross the entire way of the *Via Dolorosa*. The Roman soldiers compelled Simon of Cyrene to assist Jesus on His march up to Golgotha. Once they reached Golgotha, the soldiers unsympathetically crucified Jesus. The pain Jesus suffered through this process would have been excruciating.

Yet, His suffering was not limited to physical pain. Jesus also endured public humiliation. He was stripped bare and forced to watch as greedy soldiers gambled to secure His last earthly possession. Finally, Jesus experienced utter rejection from all directions. The soldiers, those who passed by, Jewish leaders, and criminals crucified next to Him all derided and reviled Him.

The sufferings of Jesus on Good Friday are both immeasurable and humbling. As we read this account, we are forced to ask a sobering question: Why would anyone willingly endure such treatment? Yet hours earlier, Jesus revealed to His apostles precisely why He was willing to suffer so. As they enjoyed their final supper together, Jesus uttered these amazing words, “*Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends*” (John 15:13). Jesus endured exhaustion, excruciating pain, humiliation, and rejection because He loved us while we were still sinners (Romans 5:8). Love enabled Jesus to

look past the temporary pain and instead focus on the eternal gain of His atoning work. This love that Scripture speaks of cannot be constrained to mere sentimentality. Jesus shows us that true love is costly, sacrificial, and selfless.

May we rehearse this prayer throughout our day: *Thank You, Jesus, for Your costly love.*



Reya Pitzo, age 16

# DAY 17

Luke 23:34 (ESV)  
Rob & Maggie Brayton

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*<sup>34</sup>And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide His garments.*

How often are we in a situation in which we are wronged, yet instead of praying for those who have persecuted us, we become angered, frustrated, or speak ill of them? More times than we like to admit, we find our flesh is a tough animal to contend with. Thank God for His Holy Spirit and the ability to overcome!

Christ demonstrated such amazing grace and love for us, uttering the above prayer while hanging on the cross. In doing, so He lived out what He had preached in the Sermon on the Mount, *“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you”* (Matthew 5:44). Christ not only preached to others His Father’s goodness and character, but also practiced it, even up to the moment of His death.

His death, however, was not in vain. Much like the last part of our verse, *“And they cast lots to divide His garments,”* was a fulfillment of prophecy (Psalm 22:18), it is also the fulfillment of prophecy that through His death and resurrection OUR sins are forgiven. And through that wonderful payment, we now have an opportunity to live more like Him through His Spirit in us!

Being fully man as well as fully God, Jesus understood the ignorance of our natural state, and through His grace and sacrifice, He gave us eternal hope. His disciples, through His example, began to bear witness to this fact. Peter said, *“And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers”* (Acts 3:17). Like Peter, we can gain this understanding and adopt patience and love for others, not by our own power, but through the Holy Spirit at work in us.

*Lord, we thank You for Your wonderful grace. Please fill us with Your Spirit daily, to help us live as Jesus did no matter what comes our way. Help us to be a shining light through our actions and words of grace. Amen.*

*<sup>43</sup>And He said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”*

Hopeless and helpless! A criminal sentenced to die. A moment of realization, desperation, repentance, and a plea—“Remember me, Jesus!” Like the thief, we all are broken, needy, and desperate for God’s rescuing touch every day. This simple request, “Remember me,” reveals a heart of submission and surrender through a simple expression of faith. Jesus responds and promises that the thief will be WITH Jesus in paradise. Let us cry out today “Remember me, Jesus!”

Also, let’s not miss the overwhelming hope this life-saving encounter offers. Max Lucado declares three things that are true because Jesus promises to be WITH us:

- My mistakes are not fatal.
- My life is not futile.
- My death is not final.

In this season of Lent, whether it is a thief on a cross or each one of us, Jesus is WITH us and promises that He is a “God of second chances” who redeems our defeats and brokenness. Our sinful and struggling life does not cancel God’s love, grace, and forgiveness. Let this hope capture you: there is life beyond death and the grave because Jesus remembers you, and you are WITH Him today and for eternity. Hallelujah, what a Savior!



*Jessica Kopecky*

*<sup>26</sup>When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup>Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.*

Jesus’s third statement from the cross was “*Woman, behold your son!*” By addressing Mary in His darkest hour, He displayed the love of a Son for His mother. It is interesting to note that in His address, Jesus used the term “woman” rather than “mother.” His word translated, means “dear woman,” which would have been a formal way to address her. Mary was a widow, and as her firstborn, Jesus was legally responsible for her welfare. It is possible Jesus used this formal address because He wanted His words to be understood as a testamentary disposition under Jewish family law. The declaration would have made it clear that, immediately upon Jesus’s death, John would manage Jesus’s estate, including care for Mary.

When Jesus said, “*Behold, your mother!*” to His disciple, John, He was entrusting John with Mary’s care. John was one of three disciples closest to Jesus, and the only disciple at the foot of the cross. When all the other disciples were afraid of being associated with Jesus after He was condemned, John stayed by His side. Because of John’s dedication to following Jesus, he was entrusted with caring for Mary. This is emphasized by the fact that John was chosen above members of Jesus’s own immediate family, some of whom did not yet believe Jesus was the Son of God (John 7:5).

These verses do more than show how Jesus cared for His mother. They also demonstrate to us how a new family is formed by all who trust in Jesus and dedicate their lives to Him. Do you trust in Christ? If you do, then you too have a new family—a family created by faith alone in the crucified Christ and resurrected Lord.

# DAY 20

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Matthew 27:46 (ESV)

David & Jane Wheat

*<sup>46</sup>And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?”*

Twenty years ago, the movie *The Passion of the Christ* was released. It graphically portrayed the physical torture Jesus endured at the cross. Many Christians could not bear to watch it. Jesus was slapped, hit, and spit upon. A crown of thorns was pressed into His scalp. He was beaten with a whip designed to shred a person's back and legs down to the bone. Nails were driven through His hands and feet, and He was hung on a cross to die a slow, excruciating death. Isaiah 52:14 says, *“His appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any human being and His form marred beyond human likeness.”*

A non-biblical source suggests that when Mary was escorted to the crucifixion, she looked up at the three crosses, couldn't identify her disfigured Son, and asked, “Which one is He?”

Every breath on the cross was a struggle for Jesus. For six agonizing hours, every movement produced jarring pain.

The movie did an excellent job of portraying the physical agony Jesus experienced for us. But it came short of capturing the most important aspect of the cross—the pain Jesus went through from bearing the weight of the world's sin. The torture Christ experienced from being separated from His Holy Father who cannot look upon sin was infinitely more devastating than His physical pain. It was this separation that caused Jesus to cry out. But why was He willing to suffer this separation from His Father? So we would never have to.



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<sup>28</sup>*After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), “I thirst.”*

Hanging above a door in our home, we have a vintage picture that has the seven sayings of Christ on the cross. It has hung there for many years and has served as a reminder of His divinity and humanity. Unlike the other six sayings, *“I thirst”* expresses His human need.

Jesus was fully God yet experienced all the same aspects of our physical condition, including thirst, hunger, and every emotion. While He was on earth, He had needs that had to be met.

When John wrote this simple sentence, he was careful in pointing out that this fulfilled Old Testament Scriptures about the Messiah. *“They gave Me poison for food, and for My thirst they gave Me sour wine to drink”* (Psalm 69:21). Psalm 22:15 says, *“My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue sticks to My jaws: You lay Me in the dust of death.”*

Crucifixion caused severe dehydration, blood loss, and excruciating pain. In fact, the very word “excruciating” is derived from the word “crucifixion”. Jesus’s physical body needed water. We can’t deny that He experienced every human need, including pain and suffering. In this way, we can be confident knowing He can relate to all our needs.

Jesus is also fully God. Colossians 2:9 says, *“For in Him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.”* Because of Christ’s thirst on the cross, our thirst for God can be satisfied.

*Father, we give You thanks for understanding our humanness by sending Christ Your Son. Help us to remember that His sacrifice gave us the way to be forever in Your presence. As we walk through our day, open our eyes to those around us that have human needs and thirsts that can only be quenched by You. Amen.*

# DAY 22

Luke 23:46 (ESV)

Jerry & Suzanne Grim

Todd, Sarah, Kate, & Emily Hostetler

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*“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit!” And having said this He breathed His last.*

Our faith rests on Jesus’s living the perfect life, dying, and being resurrected. In this dark, hard moment where Jesus acted out His love in a painful and personal sacrifice, Jesus models viewing life through the lens of eternity and praying Scripture.

Jesus willingly followed the redemptive plan of God. While every part of His mock trial was unfair and unjust from a human perspective, He was not in the midst of a random, unfortunate situation. In fact, He had already told His disciples multiple times that this was going to happen and how it would happen. Jesus was in full obedience to God as He walked the predetermined plan to offer us a relationship and right standing with God. He showed us the magnitude of His love. He showed us the triune God can be trusted.

In this passage, Jesus modeled 1) living with an eternal perspective during challenges and 2) praying the words of Scripture itself.

First, Jesus did not focus on the short time of terrible pain and suffering but focused on the eternity we will spend together. In our own hardships, may we learn from His example shown in unimaginable emotional and physical pain and terribly unfair circumstances. In all things, may we look at the people, events, and decisions in our life through the lens of eternity.

Second, in this intense moment, Jesus prayed Psalm 31:5. When we struggle to pray in difficult circumstances, may we look to Scripture for words to pray. Here are verses that have guided prayer in our family:

- Prayer for hope and peace: Romans 15:13; Philippians 4:6-7
- Prayer for wisdom and discernment: Philippians 1:9-11
- Prayer for growth in Christian life: Ephesians 3:16-21; Colossians 3:12-17
- Prayer for salvation of loved ones: Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 4:6

May we follow Jesus’s example to focus on eternity and pray Scripture as we walk through life together.

*<sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in His divine forbearance He had passed over former sins.*

To understand these dense verses, we must identify the subject: God's righteousness. Righteousness is a complex word, and since, at its core, it is about *rightly* ordered relationships it can mean uprightness, honesty, justice, equality, and fairness, depending on context. The question raised over and over again in the Old Testament, the question these verses help answer is, *how will God be shown righteous given His holiness and promise?* God is holy; thus, righteousness to His own character does not allow sin to go unpunished. Yet, God bound Himself to humanity, promising to bless all families through Abraham's offspring, so it would be unrighteous to destroy the heirs of this promise. God entered this tension Himself! How will God be shown *right* since, in His divine forbearance, He passed over former sins? How will God be shown *right* to bless all the families of the world if all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God? The tension is set, and the solution seems impossible, but then God put forth Jesus.

Jesus proves God's righteousness. Heirs of the promise must be made righteous with God and put into a right relationship with Him so as to not be under the penalty of sin, which is death. God Himself offers this *rightness* as a gift by grace: justification (a declaration of righteousness). And God is shown *righteous* in declaring this because He put forth Jesus as a substitute. Jesus was handed over to the consequence of sin, which is death, and by shedding His blood, He *covered* for sin, redeeming the heirs of God's promise from death. The question becomes, how does one become an heir? Is it by being Jewish? Is it through the law? No! It is by faith! God is right and declares right those who have faith in Jesus!

# DAY 24

John 19:30 (ESV)  
Senior Pastor Jeffrey Hinds

*<sup>30</sup>When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished,” and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.*

Certain Biblical words are so powerful that they stand alone. The Greek word Tetelestai is among them. This word is recorded in John 19:30 and translated by 3 English words: “*It is finished.*” According to Matthew 27:45, Jesus uttered this during the “9th hour,” 3:00 p.m., on Passover while on the cross. The 9th hour, on Passover, annually, was when Jews sacrificed a lamb as a temporary payment (atonement) for personal sin (Exodus 12:1-3). The time was marked by a shofar (a ram’s horn) signaling that it was time for their lamb sacrifice.

“Tetelestai” cried Jesus, as He became the perfect, sufficient, final sacrifice (atonement) needed for our sins. Tetelestai is Jesus’s declaration that He is the final sacrificial Lamb capable of taking away the sins of the world (John 1:29). He paid for our sins, but we need to respond with faith and acceptance of Him alone as our personal Savior and Lord.

This same word, Tetelestai, was used in the 1st-century penal system after a prisoner’s sentence was paid in full. The warden would then write Tetelestai on parchment which served as freedom papers. The debt was paid, the bondage was over, and the prisoner was set free. Jesus offers to be our Lamb, to pay our sin debt, to fulfill our death penalty, and to set us spiritually free. He died, rose again, and offers us His righteousness through faith as we accept Him as Savior and Lord. He offers to exchange (imputation) His righteousness for our unrighteousness (Romans 3:23; 5:1-2; 6:23; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:21). He offers to give us eternal life (John 3:16). Tetelestai: the believer’s bondage to sin and death is permanently finished.



*Samantha Slowiak*  
*"It is Finished"*

# DAY 25

Matthew 27:45-50 (ESV)

Pastor Isaiah & Amy DeMoss & Family

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<sup>45</sup>Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour. <sup>46</sup>And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” <sup>47</sup>And some of the bystanders, hearing it, said, “This Man is calling Elijah.” <sup>48</sup>And one of them at once ran and took a sponge, filled it with sour wine, and put it on a reed and gave it to Him to drink. <sup>49</sup>But the others said, “Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save Him.” <sup>50</sup>And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up His spirit.

May 10, 1994, marked a historic day as a solar eclipse was visible across much of North America, including the Midwestern United States. For a brief period of time, when the sun should have been at its strongest and brightest, a hazy, orange hue painted the landscape—it was quite ominous!

Just hours before Christ died on the cross, a similar darkness covered the landscape. Although Matthew doesn't give us a qualifier regarding the physical gloominess, the imagery is striking as this was the world's darkest hour. It was dark as God the Father turned His face away from God the Son. It was dark as bystanders thought Jesus called out to Elijah to come and save Him. It was dark as Jesus was offered sour wine to drink. It was dark as Jesus closed His eyes in death. However, just as the 1994 solar eclipse was temporary (lasting only minutes), the world's darkest hours were also temporary. Darkness would soon erupt into glorious light!

Were you there when they CRUCIFIED my LORD?  
Were you there when they

Crucified  
my LORD?



oh oh oh...

Sometimes  
it causes me  
to tremble

tremble  
tremble

"But  
HE was PIERCED for our transgressions,  
HE was CRUSHED for our iniquities;  
the PUNISHMENT that brought us

Peace was upon HIM,  
and by HIS STRIPES

we are Healed" ISAIAH 53:5

were you  
there  
when  
they  
CRUCIFIED  
my  
LORD?

RX 4/10/20

Rebekah Anderson



# DAY 26

Matthew 27:51-56 (ESV)  
Pastor Jeff & Billie Weiss & Family

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*<sup>51</sup>And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split. <sup>52</sup>The tombs also were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised, <sup>53</sup>and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many. <sup>54</sup>When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, “Truly this was the Son of God!” <sup>55</sup>There were also many women there, looking on from a distance, who had followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering to Him, <sup>56</sup>among whom were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Joseph and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.*

Supplies needed: One sheet of white paper & pencils, crayons, or markers for each person.

Activity: Draw and color a temple curtain on your paper. Read Exodus 26:31 for a description of God’s design for the curtain in the tabernacle, which served as a model for the curtain in the temple. When finished, begin the devotional.

In Bible times, the temple in Jerusalem contained a curtain with a special purpose. It is believed that this curtain was about 60 feet tall, 30 feet wide, and 4 inches thick. It hid the ark of the covenant, which was a very special golden container. In Old Testament times, God chose to show His presence in a cloud above the ark. The ark was kept within the Most Holy Place in the temple and showed that God was with His people. The curtain was a special divider that God designed, and He gave instructions to Moses (Exodus 26:31-33) for its creation. Its purpose was to protect people from entering into the direct presence of God because He is holy, and sinful people (this includes everyone) cannot enter His presence, or they would die (Leviticus 16:2).

But then... Jesus, the perfect sacrifice, died for our sins. When He died on the cross, the curtain in the temple that separated us from the presence of God was torn in two (*each person rips their curtain drawing in two from the top to the bottom*). Jesus took the rightful punishment for our sins. Now, if we accept Jesus as our Savior, nothing is separating us from God.

The holiness of God remains unchanged for all eternity—even after the curtain was torn. What has changed is that the death of Jesus on the cross has provided the sacrifice for our sins. He has made the way for us to enter into a personal relationship with Him for the glory of God the Father. God

wants us to be close to Him, and now we can be—through Jesus.

Pray together, thanking God for sending Jesus to take our sin upon Himself and die in our place so that there is now no barrier between us.



*Tatianna Aldrich, age 11*

# DAY 27

Matthew 27:57-61 (ESV)  
Chris & Angela Aldrich

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*<sup>57</sup>When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. <sup>58</sup>He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. <sup>59</sup>And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud <sup>60</sup>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. <sup>61</sup>Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb.*

Joseph of Arimathea was a disciple of Jesus who was “*looking for the kingdom of God*” (Mark 15:43). I wonder if there was disappointment as he asked for the dead body of Jesus. Regardless, Joseph chose to honor Jesus. He made sure Jesus’s body was taken down from the cross and buried before the Sabbath began. He purchased the linen shroud to wrap Jesus’s body for burial. He sacrificed his own tomb to bury the body of Jesus. Joseph didn’t see the end. He didn’t know what we now know. Yet in the midst of it all, even when circumstances didn’t make sense, he gave his best, burying the One he could only have hoped would save him.

Burial. It can feel so final. Yet God was at work in the midst of it all, orchestrating every little detail. Prophecy was being fulfilled. Jesus was buried with the wicked and with a rich man (Isaiah 53:9). God’s greater plan was still being accomplished. Jesus was not an earthly king, as was expected by many people, but our heavenly King (John 18:36).

How often are we disappointed when God doesn’t answer a prayer the way we hope or move in a way we expect of Him? We bury our hopes. We bury our dreams. Do we still trust that somehow, some way, God is working out His greater plan for our good and His glory (Romans 8:28)? His thoughts are not our thoughts, nor are His ways our ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). God sees the big picture. He is orchestrating every little detail. We can trust Him, even when current circumstances don’t make sense. We need to make the choice to honor Him, no matter what. He deserves our all. He is worthy.

*<sup>62</sup>The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate <sup>63</sup>and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while He was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ <sup>64</sup>Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples go and steal Him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” <sup>65</sup>Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” <sup>66</sup>So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.*

In the text, we see the priests and Pharisees go to Pilate because they fear an even greater deception than Jesus claiming to be the Messiah is about to take place. After hearing these concerns, Pilate calls for the tomb to be sealed as securely as possible. Guards are posted to stand watch for three days and three nights. The tomb is being secured for three days because Jesus had said He would rise on the third day.

The priests and Pharisees don't really believe that Jesus will rise from the dead, but they are worried that the disciples are going to take Jesus's body and fake His resurrection. The tomb will be sealed, and the guards will take watch as if their lives depended on it—because they did! The goal of the priests and Pharisees was to make it humanly impossible to enter or exit Jesus's tomb. Not even one of the most powerful nations at the time could stop Jesus from rising from the dead. Even the heaviest stone and strongest guard stood no chance against Jesus's promise.

As people who celebrate Easter, we know that Jesus did indeed roll the stone away and defeat death. With this great news of the Resurrection, those who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ alone for salvation can have great hope. When our time here on earth comes to an end, we can be assured that we will spend eternity in heaven with our Savior who died, was buried, and rose again.

Thoughts to consider:

- What stood out to you most as you read this account?
- This is one of many pieces of evidence that the resurrection of Jesus is real. Can you think of any others?
- Have you received the free gift that Jesus gave by laying down His life for us? If so, do you feel the hope of the resurrection to come?

# DAY 29

2 Corinthians 5:21 (ESV)

Doug Hinds

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*<sup>21</sup>For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Now, I want all of you, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, to think about being in school. Let's suppose that you are all in the same school, in the fourth grade. Everyone is afraid of the Principal. Thinking He is mean, the kids (behind His back) give Him an unflattering nickname: "Mr. Huffy-Puffy." Although it is not accurate, the kids assume that "Mr. Huffy Puffy" makes lots of unfair rules. In truth, He does make some rules—but only ones that are needed. Yet few at the school pay attention to any of "Mr. Huffy-Puffy's" rules—they mess up and disobey a lot.

There is One Kid in the school who follows all of "Mr. Huffy-Puffy's" rules perfectly. His name is Yeshua—a strange name for a strange Kid who obeys 100% of the time!

One day, "Mr. Huffy-Puffy" calls the school into the auditorium. "I'm going to execute discipline for all the rules that you all have ignored or broken. The discipline is going to be something bad that you will never forget. However, instead of disciplining each of you for your own disobedience, I am going to offer to transfer all of your mess-ups (sins) to just One Person, Yeshua. If you will ask Him, He will take your punishment for you."

Well, this really happened! Yeshua is the Hebrew word for Jesus. He was put on a cross and paid for our sins by dying for us. We are the disobedient students; every person has messed up and disobeyed "Mr. Huffy-Puffy's" rules. By the way, the nickname "Mr. Huffy-Puffy" is all wrong! It turns out that the Principle is gracious, loving, and forgiving! The Principal is really our Great God! Furthermore, Yeshua is His Son, Jesus.

Jesus was nailed to the cross, offering payment for our sins. He died for us, and He remained in the grave for three days. Then our Great God raised Jesus from the dead and offered that anyone who believes in Jesus, and calls on Him to be their Savior and Lord, can be forgiven. Have you done this?

*<sup>5</sup>He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in Him.*

With this verse, Paul (via the Holy Spirit) is addressing a heresy being taught to the Colossians. Spiritually speaking, the church at Colossae was pretty young in their Christian maturity. This made them an easy target for those who would teach another so-called gospel.

What they were teaching was a deadly lie with eternal ramifications. They attacked the very heart of the true gospel—that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. They were teaching a “Christ-plus” salvation, saying that Christ is not sufficient.

Their list of “plus” errors is long:

- You must obtain secret knowledge in order to be saved, and this knowledge was not available to all.
- You must follow certain ceremonies, rituals, and restrictions in order to be saved.
- You must worship angels.
- You must adhere to human wisdom, tradition, and philosophies.

They also taught errors like these:

- Christ could not be both human and divine.
- There is nothing wrong with immorality (sin).
- Spirit is good, and matter is evil.

Many of these things should sound familiar. We live in a “Christ-plus” society. So many people combine some level of belief in Christ with all manner of unbiblical, unrighteous beliefs.

Paul combats these falsehoods by emphasizing that Christ’s death and resurrection gave Him victory over all spiritual rulers and authorities. The Romans held a large celebration when they were victorious over an enemy. The Roman generals would dress as the false god Jupiter and parade down the streets with their captives to humiliate them. Similarly, God makes a public spectacle of His enemies in His triumph over death through Jesus.

Let this scripture comfort you as it demonstrates both the power of God and the control He has. We can trust Him and His plans.

# DAY 31

1 Corinthians 1:18 (ESV)

Doug & Sandy Lamberg

*<sup>18</sup>For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

Have you had that “light-bulb” moment when the message of the cross (the gospel) went from being moronic foolishness to a life-changing, peace-giving reality?

The message of the cross is often dismissed as insufficient, too easy, or simply unnecessary. Being saved from the punishment of sin through Christ’s death on the cross makes no sense to the lost. Why is it rejected as ludicrous? *“The god of this age (Satan) has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God”* (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV).

Throughout history, people have sought God on their own terms. But Isaiah 59:2 (NIRV) explains, *“[Y]our sins have separated you from your God. They have caused Him to turn His face away from you. So He won’t listen to you.”*

Praise God that He offers a solution! *“[W]hoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life”* (John 5:24). Hallelujah!

Proclaim with Paul, *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes”* (Romans 1:16a-b).

*Father God, we are grateful that, in Your abundant mercy, You opened our spiritual eyes to the truth of Your righteousness and our need. While we were still sinners, You sent Your only Son to shed His blood on the cross as payment for our sins. You led us to repentance, and by faith, we became Your children. Give us Your heart for the lost and the boldness to share the glorious message of the cross. In Jesus’s precious name we pray, amen.*

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*<sup>14</sup>But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

What do we boast about in today's world: our education, family, jobs, etc.? When we think of religious things, we often boast about our denomination, the local church we attend, our pastor or teacher, and our church attendance.

However, the Apostle Paul states that all these things are of no value when the bottom line has eternal consequences. When Paul reviews his life (Philippians 3:4-8), the things above (that we tend to value) lose their eternal value, as none of them can make a person good enough to spend eternity with a Holy God.

As we contemplate Lent during this season, and the cost of making a way to bring sinful humanity into a saving relationship with God Himself, we need to understand what the Bible says. The Bible says that all have sinned and deserve eternity away from God's presence in a place called hell (Romans 5:8-10; 6:23). The Bible also says that God sent His Son Jesus to earth (the Christmas holiday we celebrate in December). The reason Jesus came is celebrated on Good Friday and Easter. Good Friday is the day Jesus died and was buried, and Easter is the day Jesus arose alive from the tomb. These two events are God's way of providing salvation to all who believe.

God offers this salvation to all who believe that Jesus died and rose again for their forgiveness—these believers will have eternal life. During this Lenten season, may we each truly boast in what matters: what Jesus did for you and for me.



# DAY 33

Romans 6:6 (ESV)  
Pastor Dave & Carole Mahler

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*“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.”*

It is easy for us to picture Jesus crucified on the cross. It was a reality, and we have seen many pictures depicting His crucifixion. It is more difficult to see ourselves being crucified because we are still alive. For us, it is a matter of accepting by faith the Word of God that says Jesus was our substitute. We know that Jesus paid for our sins on the cross, lifting the eternal death penalty that lay on us, and giving us eternal life. However, there were more benefits achieved for us by His death; this passage talks about one of them.

It says that our old self was crucified with Him so that we might no longer be enslaved to sin. The Greek word Paul uses for “old” here does not mean old in years; rather, it is something that is worn out and useless. He is referring to our sinful nature, which will be with us until we die. The good news is that we no longer have to be a slave to our sinful nature that tempts us to turn away from God. We now have the power to turn away from sin and live a life for God. Along with our eternal life came the gift of the Holy Spirit, who gives us the power to say no to sin and yes to God.

We are not trapped in a situation where we say, “I couldn’t help myself.” Jesus’s death and resurrection has opened a door to give us joy instead of sorrow, hope instead of despair, peace instead of confusion, and freedom instead of captivity to sin in our lives.

As we walk through this Lenten season, let us trust in God’s Spirit to give us hope and joy in the knowledge that the grave could not hold Jesus, and the grave will not be able to hold us either. For when the Son sets you free, you are free indeed.

*<sup>1</sup>Then I saw in the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. <sup>2</sup>And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” <sup>3</sup>And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, <sup>4</sup>and I began to weep loudly because no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. <sup>5</sup>And one of the elders said to me, “Weep no more; behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that He can open the scroll and its seven seals.”*

Have you ever locked your keys in your car? There was a time when you could only use a key to unlock your car. If you locked your keys inside, you could be stranded. It could seem to be a hopeless situation. Often, you would have to find a phone to call a locksmith or perhaps the police to rescue you from your embarrassing situation. Having the expertise, they could save you, allowing you to head toward your destination.

In our passage for today, John sees a scroll in the hand of the One seated on the throne. There are several ideas about what this scroll contains, but the best understanding is that it contains all of God’s will for history, including the judgment of the wicked and the redemption of His people.

John begins weeping as it seems that no one can open this scroll. The thought that the sinful nature of humankind makes it impossible for anyone to be instrumental in God’s purpose to reconcile all things to Himself is disturbing. It seems to be a hopeless situation.

Then the elder tells John to stop weeping and says, “**BEHOLD!**” This means “Pay attention! What is to follow is very important!” John now sees the Lion of the Tribe Judah, the Root of David. This is Jesus, through whom all of the prophecies of the Old Testament are fulfilled. Through His death on the cross, He paid the penalty for the sins of the world, and His victorious resurrection has conquered sin and death. He alone is worthy. Only He can open the scroll, accomplishing God’s sovereign will for all of creation. He is worthy!

May we surrender our lives to the only One who is worthy to save us from our hopeless situation.

# DAY 35

Revelation 5:6-14 (ESV)

Pastor Ryan Bare

*“And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. <sup>7</sup>And He went and took the scroll from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne. <sup>8</sup>And when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. <sup>9</sup>And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are You to take the scroll and to open its seals, for You were slain, and by Your blood You ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, <sup>10</sup>and You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” <sup>11</sup>“Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup>saying with a loud voice, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” <sup>13</sup>And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” <sup>14</sup>And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.*

In July of 2022, the mayor of Calgary, Alberta, Canada, asked that people would stop using a title that had been used in the city for at least 100 years. She asked that city council members, administrators, and members of the public in general no longer call her “Your Worship.” What does the word “worship” actually mean? The Middle English word “worth-ship” eventually became abbreviated as “worship.” It means to ascribe worth to an individual or object. God is *worthy* of our honor and praise; therefore we must worship Him.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is worthy of worship. The occasion that caused the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders to pour out their praise to Christ in this passage was the transfer of authority to the Son, signaling the coming judgment that would be meted out by Him. Notice, however, how the Son of God is pictured in this particular scene. He is a Lamb and not just a Lamb but a Lamb that had been slain. It reminds us of the great sacrifice of Christ on our behalf and the perfect plan that the Father has for the sending of His Son. At His first coming, Christ came to live a sinless life and be a perfect sacrifice for sin. At His second coming, He shall execute judgment and reign as King.

How is your worship? What are you and I ascribing worth to? Our possessions, our hobbies, and even our relationships have their place, but they must not take the place of Christ. It may seem odd to the rest of the world to worship a “Lamb who was slain,” but this Lamb is our Lord and Savior, and He is worthy of our worship.



*Brinley Slowiak, age 5*  
*“Thank You Jesus”*

# DAY 36

Romans 5:1-2 (ESV)

Pastor Brian & Kristin Whitaker

*'Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Through Him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.*

Do you remember a time you received a gift that you desperately wanted, only to find with disappointment that it did not delight you the way you had hoped? I remember as a middle schooler receiving a watch that was also a calculator, only to be disappointed at how impossibly small the buttons were. I gave up on it after a very short time. That gift did not delight me.

The gift of salvation is very different! This gift satisfies us beyond our expectations. In fact, the more we learn about it, the more we see its incredible value!

From these specific verses, here are some components of that gift:

- We are justified by faith, which means we are declared to be righteous because our sins have been forgiven.
- We have peace with God through Jesus, which reminds us that we had been enemies of God prior to salvation (Romans 5:6-10), but now we have a peaceful relationship with the God of the universe.
- We have access to His grace, which brings the invitation to come into His presence at any time because we belong to Him.
- We can rejoice in the hope of the glory of God, which supplies us with joy and hope no matter what external circumstances we may be facing.

This amazing gift of salvation will never disappoint. Quite the opposite, it will delight us now and for all eternity!

This week as we come to Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, let's rejoice in all God has done for us through Jesus!

*Father, thank You for this amazing gift of salvation through Jesus. May we live in gratitude and joy each day.*



Maria DeBroux  
"His Kingdom Come"

# DAY 37

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Matthew 28:1-10 (ESV)

Dave & Tracy Cooper

*‘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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. <sup>7</sup>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.” <sup>8</sup>So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. <sup>9</sup>And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”*

What comes to mind first when you hear the name “Mary Magdalene”? In Luke 8:2 (NLT), we read, *“Among them were Mary Magdalene, from whom He had cast out seven demons.”* Yes, Jesus cast seven demons out of Mary Magdalene. From that moment on, her life was never the same. She followed Jesus and most likely witnessed many miracles. She was a witness to the gospel we preach: the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

In Matthew 27:45-56, we read that Mary Magdalene watched from a distance as Jesus shouted, gave up His spirit, and then died. Later, in Matthew 27:57-61, we read that she watched as Jesus’s wrapped body was placed in a tomb with a great stone blocking the entrance.

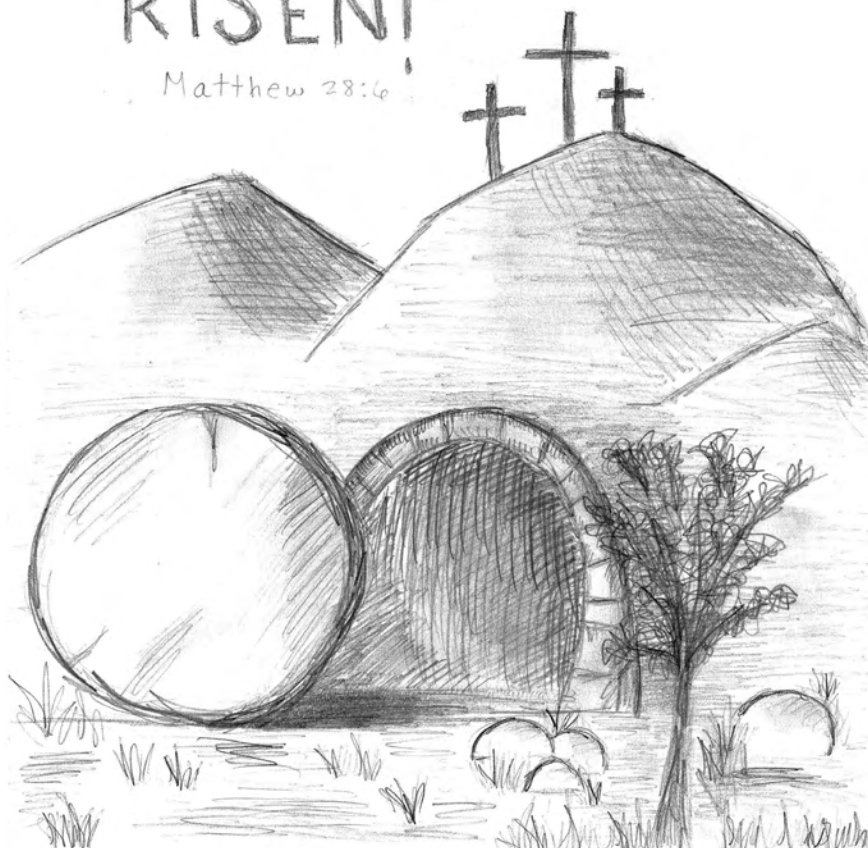
Then, early on Sunday morning, Mary Magdalene approached the tomb, only to find the stone rolled away with an angel sitting on it. This angel told a frightened Mary Magdalene that Jesus was alive, no longer in the tomb, and that she needed to go quickly and tell His disciples this good news. Without hesitation, Mary Magdalene ran away, full of joy, and then something happened on her way: she met the resurrected Jesus! After having seven demons cast out of her, following Jesus during His ministry, and watching His death and burial, Mary Magdalene was greeted by her risen Savior. Just as He had promised, He was alive! And what was her response? Mary Magdalene grasped the feet of Jesus and worshiped Him. Can you imagine it? Happy tears!!!

Let us also rejoice in the resurrection of our Savior, Jesus!

*Father God, thank you for the gift of Your Son, Jesus. Jesus, thank You for Your willingness to die on the cross for my sins, which I could never pay for. You suffered, died, and were buried for my sins but rose again, having victory over death. May we never forget Your gift of salvation. Amen!*

He is  
RISEN!

Matthew 28:6



Kaydee Rennie



# DAY 38

Matthew 28:16–20 (ESV)  
Pastor Dan & Laura Shields

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*<sup>16</sup>Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. <sup>17</sup>And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted. <sup>18</sup>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. <sup>19</sup>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, <sup>20</sup>teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Have you ever thought about what your mission in life is? Without a doubt, the world would answer this question with a variety of answers. “Get rich! Gain power and influence! Do whatever makes you happy! Please people rather than God!” Unfortunately, those who give such answers will find that their life mission is a failing attempt to set up their own small, self-focused, and self-destructive kingdom. This is not the kind of mission that the resurrected Jesus had in mind for His people.

In the closing words of Matthew’s Gospel account, Jesus gives the disciples a mission. A mission that is coming from the One who has been given *“All authority.”* A mission from the One who had just defeated sin and death. What mission did Jesus give? It’s a mission about “making disciples.” A disciple is a follower or a student of Jesus, one whose life is fully committed and submitted to the King.

Christians make disciples by going, baptizing, and teaching. We need to obey the promptings of Jesus’s mission as we interact with those in our neighborhoods and around the globe. As we encourage people to be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we are helping people declare they are disciples. As we teach people to learn and obey the commands of Jesus, we are staying mission-focused.

And although we are commanded to saturate ourselves in this mission, we do not accomplish it on our own. Jesus said, *“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Praise the Lord! Jesus is with us in the mission. This Lenten season, may we be a people of faith that fully engage in the mission of our risen Savior. Let’s make disciples.

*<sup>1</sup>But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they went to the tomb, taking the spices they had prepared. <sup>2</sup>And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb, <sup>3</sup>but when they went in they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. <sup>4</sup>While they were perplexed about this, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel. <sup>5</sup>And as they were frightened and bowed their faces to the ground, the men said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? <sup>6</sup>He is not here, but has risen. Remember how He told you, while He was still in Galilee, <sup>7</sup>that the Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men and be crucified and on the third day rise.” <sup>8</sup>And they remembered His words, <sup>9</sup>and returning from the tomb they told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. <sup>10</sup>Now it was Mary Magdalene and Joanna and Mary the mother of James and the other women with them who told these things to the apostles, <sup>11</sup>but these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them. <sup>12</sup>But Peter rose and ran to the tomb; stooping and looking in, he saw the linen cloths by themselves; and he went home marveling at what had happened.*

This is perhaps one of the most incredible statements we can find in Scripture. After everything that had just happened to Jesus in the previous days, the last thing that they would have expected was for His body to not be where they laid it. Take a moment and put yourself in their sandals. Can you imagine? Then suddenly, there were two angels who reminded them that Jesus already told them that this would happen. Then, in verse 8, we get to see the light bulb go on! *“And they remembered His words”*—then the ladies ran away! However, it was not out of fear... but rather, it was out of excitement! They had to let others know! The ladies went back to the village to tell the disciples and *“all the rest.”*

When the ladies came back to town, they found the disciples. They told the men about their encounter—the body of Jesus being gone, their confusion, and the angels that showed up and spoke with them. Now, instead of sharing the same excitement and belief the women had, verse 11 tells us that *“these words seemed to them an idle tale, and they did not believe them.”* These men, collectively, were not going to fall for such a far-fetched story after all they had experienced. Only days ago, they were with Jesus and faithfully following Him—and now, they see the women’s account as a foolish story. It’s a sad response. However, Peter responds differently! Read verse 12 to see his response. Peter responds to the Resurrection with faith, excitement, and pondering.

Do you truly believe, ponder, and get excited about the incredible reality that Jesus is alive today? It can be easy to doubt and wonder if it is a far-fetched story. However, the Bible is clear—Jesus has risen! May we respond like Peter did, with excitement, pondering, and (most importantly) belief that is rooted in faith.

# DAY 40

John 20:1–20 (ESV)  
Pastor Dan & Sue MacDonald

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*‘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. <sup>2</sup>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.” <sup>3</sup>So Peter went out with the other disciple, and they were going toward the tomb. <sup>4</sup>Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup>And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in. <sup>6</sup>Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen cloths lying there, <sup>7</sup>and the face cloth, which had been on Jesus’ head, not lying with the linen cloths but folded up in a place by itself. <sup>8</sup>Then the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; <sup>9</sup>for as yet they did not understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup>Then the disciples went back to their homes.*

There are different ways to “see” things. When someone says, “I see,” what are some things that might mean?

In the passage, John uses three different Greek words to describe what it means to “see.” Mary Magdalene “saw” that the stone had been taken away. When John reached the tomb, he stooped down and looked in and “saw” the linen cloths that had been wrapped around Jesus’s body lying there. Like Mary, he simply observed. That is one type of seeing.

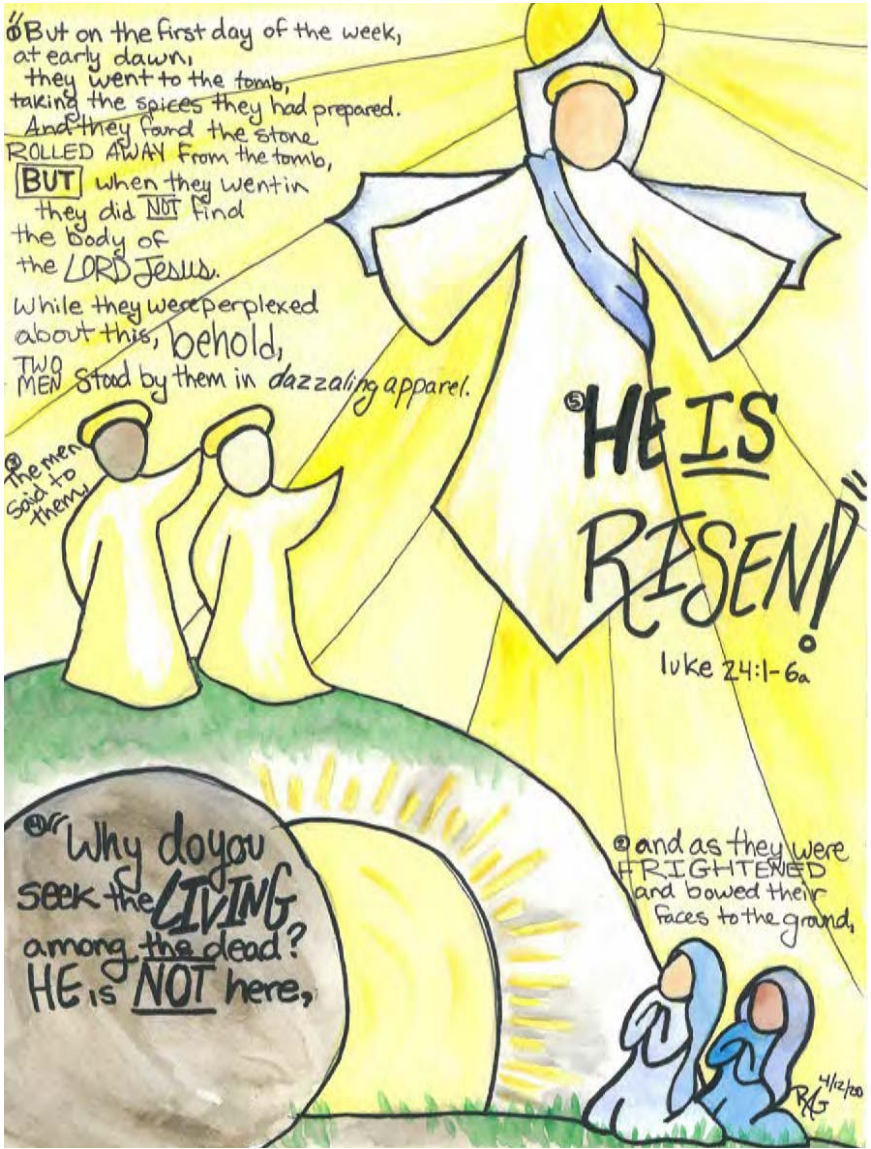
When Peter got there, in typical Peter fashion, he blew past John and went right into the tomb. He, too, “saw” the linen cloths lying there and the face cloth folded up by itself. According to the word used by John, Peter’s “seeing” goes beyond simply observing to pondering why things are the way they are—like a detective trying to figure things out.

John followed Peter into the tomb, and the “light bulbs” came on! John uses a third Greek word to describe how he “saw”! He comprehended—he suddenly understood from the neat and orderly way the linen cloths and the face cloth were situated that Jesus’s body hadn’t been stolen by someone—He had risen from the dead and was alive!

With this little bit of faith, John believed that Jesus was alive! In verse 9, John commented that the disciples had not yet understood “*the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.*” That would come later. Jesus would open the minds of His disciples to understand God’s Word—to build their faith stronger!

What about you? How do you “see” Jesus’s resurrection? Do you ponder what

happened? Do you believe the eyewitnesses who saw Jesus and wrote about it? Do you comprehend the evidence of His resurrection and believe? And if you believe, do you build your faith stronger by reading the Bible to know Jesus more? How do you “see”?



Rebekah Anderson

## *Matthew 28:1-10 (ESV)*

*<sup>1</sup>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. <sup>2</sup>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. <sup>3</sup>His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup>And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup>But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup>He is not here, for He has risen, as He said. Come, see the place where He lay. <sup>7</sup>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.” <sup>8</sup>So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell His disciples. <sup>9</sup>And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of His feet and worshiped Him. <sup>10</sup>Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell My brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me.”*

