

Devotions for the First Week of Easter, April 6-10, 2026

Easter Monday – Prayer for the Week

O God, for our redemption You gave Your only-begotten Son to death on the cross and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of the enemy. Grant that all our sin may be drowned through daily repentance and that day by day we may arise to live before You in righteousness and purity forever; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

There are two prayers appointed for Easter morning. This is the second one. If you attended service yesterday, you might have heard a different prayer. I wanted to reflect on this one because of the clause in the second line “you...delivered us from the power of the enemy.” Some time ago, my brother reminded me of a bit of familial lore. Our grandfather served in France in World War I. We have a picture of him and his 11 siblings which was taken just before he left. They wanted a picture in case he did not come back. It was not an unreasonable precaution. His troop transport, crammed full of men, became a cruise into terror when the Spanish Flu broke out. As they zig-zagged across the Atlantic to avoid German submarines, they were burying up to 90 men per day at sea. My grandfather slept on the deck to avoid the cramped and disease-ridden conditions below, often huddling under a lifeboat to avoid weather and detection. He drove a truck in that conflict. Narrowly escaped death on several occasions and returned home to his family in South Dakota.

We acknowledge that God delivers us from the power of the enemy today. The enemies may change from year to year, generation to generation, but they never really go away. They are never greater than God’s deliverance. My grandfather went on to marry, have children, and farm. He lost that farm in the great depression and eventually they settled in Wisconsin where he farmed and raised his sons through another great war. His was a life filled with many enemies who wanted to do him harm but through faith God delivered him. As his middle son, my father, was on vicarage in the early 1950’s, however, the world took one more swing at him and landed a punch. He died of cancer before my father’s vicarage year was over. I never met that grandfather who had stories of deliverance to tell.

Jesus has risen from the dead. Baptized into his death and resurrection my grandfather and I will one day be delivered from that last and greatest enemy of all, death. Then perhaps we will get to hear the stories straight from him. More likely we will have better things to talk about. My father said that when he was a child the Lutheran parish which they attended always had another service on Easter Monday. We can sing again today, with angels, archangels, and with all the company of heaven, including my grandfather, because Jesus has delivered us from the power of all our enemies. Sing an Easter hymn today.

Tuesday of Easter – Jeremiah 31:1-6

¹ “At that time, declares the LORD, I will be the God of all the clans of Israel, and they shall be my people.”

² Thus says the LORD:

“The people who survived the sword
found grace in the wilderness;

when Israel sought for rest,

³ the LORD appeared to him from far away.

I have loved you with an everlasting love;

therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.

⁴ Again I will build you, and you shall be built,

O virgin Israel!

Again you shall adorn yourself with tambourines

and shall go forth in the dance of the merrymakers.

⁵ Again you shall plant vineyards

on the mountains of Samaria;

the planters shall plant

and shall enjoy the fruit.

⁶ For there shall be a day when watchmen will call

in the hill country of Ephraim:

‘Arise, and let us go up to Zion,

to the LORD our God.’”

Jeremiah’s ministry took place in the days leading up to and including the brutal exile of God’s people. That was an isolating event which makes our problems look like a vacation. Look again at the first verse of this passage. When Jeremiah wrote the northern ten tribes of Israel had been in exile for at least six generations. They were gone and had been absorbed into the peoples of the Assyrian empire. Even to this day they exist only as tiny remnants. God declares that he will be the God of all the clans of Israel. A little further on it says that they shall plant vineyards and enjoy their fruit on the hills of Samaria, the abandoned capital of those northern cousins.

Easter calls upon us to look for God’s deliverance. Jeremiah urges us not to set our expectations too low. God has much more in mind than simply getting the homeless off the streets or fixing that bum knee or back pain which is irking you lately. He says that God will rebuild virgin Israel and that virgin shall adorn herself with tambourines and dance with the merrymakers. Read the first chapters of Hosea and see how remarkable it is that God would call Israel a virgin again and restore to those abandoned homes the joy of being God’s people once more.

The day comes when Israel’s watchmen shall call, “Arise, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.” That had not happened since the days of Solomon. In this day we are called to hope and expect great things from our God, even the resurrection and restoration of all that has been lost

since Eden's tragic day. If that seems hard to envision, take a few minutes and make a list of what you are eagerly anticipating from God's hand. Pin it up and look at it occasionally.

Wednesday of Easter – Psalm 16

- ¹ Preserve me, O God, for in you I take refuge.
- ² I say to the LORD, "You are my Lord;
I have no good apart from you."
- ³ As for the saints in the land, they are the excellent ones,
in whom is all my delight.
- ⁴ The sorrows of those who run after another god shall multiply;
their drink offerings of blood I will not pour out
or take their names on my lips.
- ⁵ The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;
you hold my lot.
- ⁶ The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;
indeed, I have a beautiful inheritance.
- ⁷ I bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
in the night also my heart instructs me.
- ⁸ I have set the LORD always before me;
because he is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.
- ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad, and my whole being rejoices;
my flesh also dwells secure.
- ¹⁰ For you will not abandon my soul to Sheol,
or let your holy one see corruption.
- ¹¹ You make known to me the path of life;
in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore

Luther said that your God is that person or thing which you believe in and trust to solve your biggest problems. We had a great deal to be afraid of in the time of pandemic. Remember that? The foe seemed much more immediate in those days. Today our pandemic fears have been replaced by others. To whom do you turn when those bugbears make your heart race? Such idols inevitably prove themselves to be fickle and faithless for those who have trusted them.

Listen to David today. He turns us to the one who really does solve our problems. He takes refuge in God. He has no good apart from God. The faithful are his delight and the idolater the object of his contempt. He is the child and heir of God. That is a good inheritance. As a result, his life is centered upon God. God gives him counsel day and night. David will not be shaken. That is quite a statement when you remember just how much the world had thrown at David.

David's spirit rejoices and his flesh is secure. God is not only promising a life hereafter. He is concerned with David's life right now. God will not abandon David or you to the grave. God has made known the path of life and joy.

This is Easter week. Jesus says that He is the Way, Truth, and Life (John 14:1ff). God has not let his Holy One see decay. After three days Jesus has risen from the dead to take care of you. Trust him. He has this in his strong and loving hands.

Thursday of Easter – Colossians 3:1-13

¹ If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. ³ For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

⁵ Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. ⁶ On account of these the wrath of God is coming. ⁷ In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. ⁸ But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. ⁹ Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices ¹⁰ and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. ¹¹ Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

¹² Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, ¹³ bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

This is another one of those evidence “ifs” I mentioned a couple of weeks ago. You have been raised with Christ. Paul is making an argument based on that fact. Baptism has done its work (see Romans 6). He is not questioning whether you have been raised with Christ.

But now that Baptism has done its resurrecting, consider what that means with Paul today. He exhorts you to seek the things that are “above where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.” What do you suppose those things are? It could mean we are to have our heads in the clouds, but that would be missing Paul's point. Look to verses 12-13 to see where we encounter the Lord enthroned and where we meet the one in whom our lives are hidden. The things above are not other-worldly in the sense that they are floating on a cloud somewhere. The things above are right in front of us. They are the new life which flows out of those baptismal waters. Jesus rose from the dead and ate with his disciples because he loves this creation. The “things above” are acts of compassionate hearts, kindnesses done with humility, meekness, and patience.

Every human heart and every Christian home needs to be a place which works on those virtues. Jesus, risen from the dead, gives you eyes to see the world in a heavenly light and bring heaven's

peace, joy, forgiveness, and love to bear upon your home right now. Sin is potent in its ability to distort and deform our relationships with those who are closest to us. Easter means that the one in whom our lives are now found is stronger. Put on that compassionate heart. Be kind, gentle, humble, meek, and patient with the people in your home. You will find that Jesus is there to help you do that. It will be good. Live out Easter's promise today.

Friday of Easter – Matthew 28:1-10

Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ² 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. ³ His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. ⁴ And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. ⁵ But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. ⁶ He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. ⁷ 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.” ⁸ So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. ⁹ And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

This Easter passage has always attracted me. The angel is just such a typical guy in this scene. He comes amid an earthquake. Rolls the huge stone away and sits on it. I can see him smugly perched up there, glowing in the early morning gloom, with a big smile upon his face. The guards are so terrified they faint like dead men. The angel turns to the women and says, “Don't be afraid.” He announces the resurrection and gives them marching orders and ends it with, “See, I have told you.” I imagine him waving them off to their task at this point.

The angel apparently does not have a lot of experience with sinful people. The women depart quickly. I would have too! But they have not kept the whole of the command. It says they leave to tell the disciples with fear and great joy. The angel had told them not to be afraid and here they are still afraid. Thank goodness, Jesus understands us. He is a real human being. He knows that, unlike angels, we are often captive to our emotions. Simply telling me not to be afraid is not enough. He seeks the women out and greets them. They touch and Jesus smiles upon them. His commands are the same as the angel's had been in content but how different they are. While they are in physical contact with one another, he says, “Do not fear. Tell my brothers...” This is what these fearful women need. Jesus speaks of brothers and stands close to them.

Jesus knows what makes you afraid today and he knows how much fear can control your life. Jesus knows that some angelic command or even an admonition from a devotional “Don't be afraid” will not take away your fear. He has risen from the dead because he understands that his

sheep need a shepherd and you need him to comfort and calm you. Hold the hand of someone you love today and reassure them that Jesus lives and loves us today. You both probably need to hear that.