

## A Letter to the Church Family

Dear Church Family,

In the weeks leading up to Easter, the church has long taken time to slow down and reflect on the final days of Jesus' earthly life—his last night with the disciples, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection. Not because these events are unfamiliar, but because they stand at the very center of our faith.

This devotional guide is meant to help us do just that.

The Last Night is a simple invitation to walk together, day by day, through the closing moments of the gospel story—from the upper room to the empty tomb. These readings are not meant to rush you, impress you, or add another spiritual task to your day. They are meant to place you, quietly and faithfully, before the Word of God, so that you can look again at Christ and consider what he has done for you.

Christianity does not begin with what we do for God. It begins with what God has done for us. In these pages, we will see that Jesus did not stumble into suffering, nor was he overcome by forces outside his control. He chose the path set before him. He bore judgment in our place. He gave himself willingly. And on the third day, he rose—not as an idea or a metaphor, but as a living Savior in history.

Each day's reading is intentionally brief, but the truths they point to are not small. My hope is not that these devotionals would make us merely more informed, but that they would help us think deeply, believe more clearly, and rest more fully in the finished work of Christ.

You may read these on your own, with your family, or alongside others. You may miss a day and return the next. There is no pressure here—only an invitation. The goal is not perfect consistency, but faithful attention to the gospel.

As we move toward Easter together, my prayer is that the Lord would use this time to steady our hearts, strengthen our assurance, and fix our eyes once again on Jesus Christ—our substitute, our Savior, and our risen King.

Grace and peace to you in Christ,

Pastor Chris

# **The Last Night: 1–14**

Daily Readings for Days 1–14

## **Day 1: A Night Chosen on Purpose**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:17–19

### **Key Truth**

The cross begins not with betrayal or violence, but with the deliberate purpose of Jesus.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Matthew shows us that the road to the cross does not begin in confusion, but in careful preparation. On the first day of Unleavened Bread, the disciples ask Jesus where they should prepare the Passover. His answer is precise and intentional. He chooses the time. He chooses the place. He sends them with a message already formed.

This matters because it reshapes how we understand everything that follows. Jesus is not swept along by events beyond his control. He is not surprised by betrayal or overtaken by violence. From the beginning of this night, he is moving forward knowingly. What is coming is not accidental, and it is not a tragic detour. It is the path he has chosen.

Matthew also wants us to notice the timing. This meal takes place during Passover—the remembrance of God delivering his people from slavery through the blood of a lamb. By choosing this night, Jesus places himself at the center of that story. He is not merely remembering Israel’s deliverance. He is bringing it to fulfillment. The rescue the Passover pointed toward is now focused on him.

This means the cross is not the failure of Jesus’ mission, but the purpose of it. The suffering that lies ahead is real, and the injustice is profound, but none of it falls outside the will of God. Jesus enters this night with full awareness, steady resolve, and unwavering love.

For us, this brings quiet assurance. God’s salvation is not improvised or reactive. It is intentional and deeply personal. When Jesus moves toward the cross, he does so with his people in mind. He chooses this night so that we might be delivered.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does knowing that Jesus chose this path shape the way you view the cross?
2. Where do you need to trust God’s purpose more deeply today?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You that the cross was not an accident, but Your willing gift. Help me trust Your purpose, even when I do not understand the path. Amen.

## **Day 2: Remembering a Greater Deliverance**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:17; Exodus 12:1–13

### **Key Truth**

God's pattern of deliverance prepares His people to understand the cross.

### **Devotional Reflection**

The meal Jesus shares with His disciples takes place during Passover, the most significant remembrance in Israel's life. For generations, God's people gathered to recall the night He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. They remembered the lamb, the blood on the doorposts, and the judgment that passed over those who were sheltered.

This was not an ordinary meal. Every detail was shaped by memory. The food, the order, the words spoken—all were meant to remind God's people who they were and how they had been saved. Passover taught Israel that freedom came at a cost, and that deliverance required a substitute.

By choosing this meal, Jesus places Himself within that story. He is not simply participating in Israel's remembrance; He is preparing His disciples to see that the greater deliverance has arrived. The rescue from Egypt pointed beyond itself to a deeper bondage and a greater freedom.

The cross will soon reveal that salvation does not come through effort or escape, but through sacrifice. Just as Israel was saved by the blood of a lamb, God's people will now be saved through Christ Himself.

Remembering shapes faith. When God calls His people to remember, it is not to stir nostalgia, but to anchor trust. The same God who delivered then is at work now.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is remembering God's past deliverance important for present faith?
2. How does the Passover help you better understand the cross?

### **Prayer**

God, thank You for being a God who saves. Help me remember what You have done and trust You today. Amen.

## **Day 3: “Is It I, Lord?”**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:20–22

### **Key Truth**

Grace invites honest self-examination without despair.

### **Devotional Reflection**

As the meal continues, Jesus speaks words that change the atmosphere of the room: “One of you will betray me.” The disciples are stunned. The night that began in celebration turns heavy with sorrow.

What is striking is how the disciples respond. They do not begin pointing fingers. No one declares confidence in their own faithfulness. Instead, one by one, they ask a searching question: “Is it I, Lord?”

Their response reveals humility. They recognize that the capacity for betrayal is not limited to someone else. They know their own weakness well enough to ask honestly whether they could be the one.

This moment teaches us something important about life with Christ. Awareness of sin does not have to lead to despair, and humility does not have to lead to fear. The disciples’ question is not asked to earn forgiveness, but because they are already with Jesus.

Grace creates space for honesty. When we are secure in Christ, we no longer need to defend ourselves or pretend strength we do not have. We can ask hard questions without running from God.

The cross will soon show that Jesus does not abandon weak disciples. He dies for them.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is it sometimes easier to see sin in others than in ourselves?
2. How does grace make honest self-examination possible?

### **Prayer**

Lord, give me a humble and honest heart before You. Thank You that Your grace meets me even in my weakness. Amen.

## **Day 4: The Cross Was Written**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:24; Revelation 13:8

### **Key Truth**

The cross is God's eternal plan, not a last-minute response.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Jesus tells His disciples that what is about to happen is not unexpected: "The Son of Man goes as it is written of him." His betrayal and death are not random events. They fulfill what God has already declared.

Scripture consistently points toward the cross. From the first sacrifice that covered human shame, to the ram provided in place of Isaac, to the blood of the Passover lamb, God has been preparing His people to understand salvation through substitution.

The New Testament confirms this pattern. The Gospels devote significant space to the crucifixion. The book of Acts proclaims it. The letters explain its meaning. Revelation presents Christ as the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world.

This tells us something steadying: God is not surprised by sin, suffering, or human failure. The cross stands at the center of His plan, revealing both His justice and His mercy.

When life feels uncertain, this truth anchors us. God's purposes are not fragile. What He planned in eternity, He accomplishes in history.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does seeing the cross as God's plan affect your trust in Him?
2. Where do you need to rest in God's purposes rather than fear uncertainty?

### **Prayer**

God, thank You that Your plans are sure and unchanging. Help me trust Your wisdom and care. Amen.

## **Day 5: Given in the Middle of the Meal**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:26

### **Key Truth**

Jesus places His death at the center of His people's life together.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Matthew tells us that as they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples. There is no ceremony described, no pause to mark a new ritual. The moment is simple and intentional.

This is how the Lord's Supper begins—not as a performance, but as a gift shared among friends. Jesus takes ordinary bread from an ordinary meal and gives it new meaning. "This is my body," He says.

By doing this, Jesus makes His death central. He does not ask His followers to reenact His miracles or preserve His teachings alone. He commands them to remember His death. Again and again, they are to return to the table and place the cross at the center.

The Lord's Supper reminds us that salvation is received, not achieved. Christ gives Himself to His people, and they receive by faith.

This simple act continues to shape the church, grounding us in what matters most.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why do you think Jesus chose such a simple act to remember His death?
2. How does the Lord's Supper keep the cross central in your faith?

### **Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for giving Yourself for me. Help me remember Your sacrifice with gratitude and faith. Amen.

## **Day 6: Sheltered by the Blood**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:27–28; Exodus 12:13

### **Key Truth**

Forgiveness comes through Christ's blood poured out on our behalf.

### **Devotional Reflection**

When Jesus speaks of the cup, He uses language filled with meaning: "This is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." These words echo the Passover story His disciples know well.

At the first Passover, God's people were saved from judgment by the blood of a lamb. Those who were sheltered under that blood were spared. Now Jesus declares that He Himself is the true Lamb, and His blood secures forgiveness.

This is the language of substitution. Christ stands in our place. Judgment does not pass over us because we are worthy, but because we are covered.

The cross reminds us that forgiveness is costly, but freely given. We do not clean ourselves before coming to God. We come trusting the work Christ has already done.

Sheltered by His blood, we live in grace, not fear.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is substitution essential to understanding forgiveness?
2. How does being "sheltered" by Christ's sacrifice bring assurance?

### **Prayer**

God, thank You for the forgiveness secured through Christ. Help me live in the freedom of Your grace. Amen.

## **Day 7: Until He Comes**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:29

### **Key Truth**

The cross points us forward to Christ's promised return.

### **Devotional Reflection**

As the meal draws to a close, Jesus speaks of the future. He tells His disciples that He will not drink the cup again until He does so with them in His Father's kingdom. Even as He moves toward the cross, His words are filled with hope.

The Lord's Supper looks backward and forward at the same time. We remember Christ's death, but we also anticipate His return. The table holds together suffering and glory, sacrifice and celebration.

This promise reminds us that the cross is not the end of the story. Death will give way to life. Shame will give way to glory. What is broken will be made whole.

Each time we remember Christ's sacrifice, we also renew our hope. The King who gave Himself for His people will come again to make all things right.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does the promise of Christ's return shape your view of the cross?
2. Where does hope in the future help you persevere today?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for the hope of Your return. Help me live with faith, patience, and confidence until You come. Amen.

## **Day 8: The Weight of the Garden**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36–38

### **Key Truth**

Jesus enters the place of pressure before He ever reaches the cross.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Matthew tells us that Jesus leads His disciples to a place called Gethsemane. The name itself is revealing. Gethsemane means “oil press”—a place where olives were crushed until the oil flowed out. Long before Jesus is crushed on the cross, He willingly walks into the press.

As He goes deeper into the garden, something begins. Matthew tells us that Jesus becomes sorrowful and troubled. This is not a passing emotion or momentary fear. Jesus describes His sorrow as overwhelming—so heavy it feels like death itself.

This moment matters because it shows us the cost of obedience. Jesus is not detached or unmoved by what lies ahead. He feels the weight fully. He does not rush past it. He enters it.

There is also something deeply human here. Jesus does not face this moment alone. He brings His closest friends with Him. He asks them to remain and watch with Him. The Son of God chooses not isolation, but shared presence.

The garden reminds us that faith does not eliminate sorrow. Obedience does not remove pressure. Sometimes it leads us directly into it.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why do you think Jesus chose to enter this moment so fully rather than avoid it?
2. How does this passage reshape your understanding of sorrow and faith?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for entering the place of pressure for me. Help me trust You when obedience feels heavy. Amen.

## **Day 9: A Greater Garden**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36–38; Romans 5:19

### **Key Truth**

Where the first Adam failed, the second Adam stands.

### **Devotional Reflection**

This is not the first garden where everything hangs in the balance. Scripture invites us to see Gethsemane in light of Eden. In the first garden, Adam was tested—and failed. He chose his own will over God's, and sin entered the world.

Now, in another garden, Jesus stands where Adam fell. He is often called the second Adam, the representative of a new humanity. What unfolds here is not only personal obedience, but cosmic restoration.

The contrast is striking. Adam reached for what was forbidden. Jesus prepares to receive what is unbearable. Adam brought death through disobedience. Jesus brings life through submission.

Gethsemane is where redemption moves from promise to action. Jesus does what no one else could do. He obeys where we could not.

This truth humbles us and comforts us. Our salvation does not rest on our ability to stand firm, but on Christ's perfect obedience in our place.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does seeing Jesus as the second Adam deepen your gratitude for salvation?
2. Where do you need to rest more fully in Christ's obedience rather than your own?

### **Prayer**

Father, thank You for sending Jesus to stand where I could not. Help me trust His obedience on my behalf. Amen.

## **Day 10: Watch and Pray**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:40–41

### **Key Truth**

Spiritual alertness grows through prayer, not resolve alone.

### **Devotional Reflection**

When Jesus returns to His disciples, He finds them asleep. His words are gentle but serious: “Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation.” He is not simply telling them to stay awake. He is calling them to spiritual attentiveness.

Matthew often uses the word “watch” to describe readiness—being alert to what God is doing and aware of one’s own weakness. The disciples’ sleep reveals something true of all of us. Our intentions may be sincere, but our strength is limited.

Jesus names this reality plainly: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.” This is not condemnation. It is clarity.

Prayer is not about proving devotion. It is about acknowledging dependence. Watching and praying keeps us grounded in truth about ourselves and about God.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is spiritual alertness so difficult to maintain?
2. How does prayer help you face temptation honestly?

### **Prayer**

Lord, help me stay awake to my need for You. Teach me to depend on You through prayer. Amen.

## **Day 11: Not My Will, but Yours**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:39

### **Key Truth**

True obedience submits the will even when the cost is known.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Jesus' prayer is both honest and obedient. He asks that the cup might pass, if possible. He does not minimize the cost or hide His anguish. Then He says words that define faithfulness: "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will."

This is not resignation. It is trust. Jesus does not pray because He lacks information. He prays because obedience requires surrender.

Prayer is not meant to bend God's will toward ours. It is meant to shape our will toward His. In this moment, Jesus submits fully, knowing exactly what that submission will cost.

This prayer teaches us that faithfulness is not pretending hardship does not exist. It is entrusting ourselves to God in the midst of it.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is honest prayer essential to genuine obedience?
2. Where do you struggle to submit your will to God's?

### **Prayer**

Father, teach me to trust Your will even when it is hard. Shape my heart through prayer. Amen.

## **Day 12: The Cup**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:39–44; Isaiah 51:17

### **Key Truth**

Jesus willingly receives the judgment meant for us.

### **Devotional Reflection**

Three times Jesus refers to the cup. In Scripture, the cup often represents God's judgment against sin. It is not merely suffering, but wrath—justice poured out against human rebellion.

What Jesus faces in Gethsemane is not fear of pain alone. It is the weight of judgment. He prepares to receive what belongs to us.

This is why His agony is so intense. The One who lived in perfect fellowship with the Father prepares to experience separation—not for His own sin, but for ours.

Here we see the depth of Christ's love. He does not step away. He does not refuse the cup. He receives it fully.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why is it important to understand the meaning of the cup Jesus drinks?
2. How does substitution deepen your assurance of forgiveness?

### **Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for receiving what I deserved. Help me rest in Your finished work. Amen.

## **Day 13: Perfect Love Under Pressure**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:36–46

### **Key Truth**

Jesus loves God and others perfectly under unbearable pressure.

### **Devotional Reflection**

In the garden, Jesus fulfills the greatest commandments. He loves God with His whole being by submitting fully to the Father's will. He loves His neighbor by bearing judgment on their behalf.

No one has ever obeyed under greater pressure. Jesus faces abandonment, agony, and judgment—and He does not turn away.

This obedience is not merely an example. It is a gift. Jesus does what we could not do, so that His righteousness might be credited to us.

The garden shows us both the cost of love and the completeness of salvation.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Why does Jesus' obedience need to be more than an example?
2. How does His perfect love give you confidence before God?

### **Prayer**

Lord Jesus, thank You for loving perfectly where I fall short. Help me trust in Your righteousness. Amen.

## **Day 14: He Stands**

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:45–46

### **Key Truth**

Jesus steps forward willingly to complete His saving work.

### **Devotional Reflection**

When the hour arrives, Jesus does not flee. He wakes His disciples and says, “Rise, let us be going.” The betrayer approaches, and the Savior stands.

This is not defeat. It is resolve. Jesus moves toward the cross with clarity and purpose. What unfolds next happens because He allows it.

The garden ends not in collapse, but in courage. Jesus stands ready to finish what He began.

Our hope rests here. Salvation is not taken from Him. It is given by Him.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. How does Jesus’ willingness strengthen your trust in Him?
2. Where does His resolve give you hope today?

### **Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for standing firm for my salvation. Help me trust You completely. Amen.

## Day 15

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:47–49

**Key Truth:** It is possible to be near Jesus outwardly and far from him inwardly.

Judas does not approach Jesus as an enemy from a distance. He comes as a disciple from within. He walks up close enough to greet him, close enough to kiss him, close enough to call him Rabbi. The betrayal is not cold and remote—it is intimate. The kiss would have been an ordinary sign of loyalty. But here it becomes a signal for arrest. Something meant to express affection is turned into a weapon. That is what makes this moment so sobering. Judas uses closeness without surrender. Matthew's account is restrained. There is no dramatic embellishment. The fact itself carries the weight. A man can walk with Jesus and still resist him. A man can hear the truth and still refuse it. Proximity is not the same as faith. This passage invites us to examine our own hearts. It is possible to speak Christian words, attend Christian gatherings, and yet keep Jesus at arm's length. True discipleship is not familiarity with Christ—it is repentance and trust in him. Jesus receives the kiss knowing what it means. He does not recoil. Even in betrayal, he moves forward according to the Father's will. Our hope rests not in the loyalty of disciples, but in the resolve of the Savior.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where might familiarity with Christ have replaced surrender in my life?
2. What does true repentance look like today?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, guard my heart from empty closeness. Give me sincere faith and a surrendered life. Amen.

## Day 16

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:50

**Key Truth:** Jesus remains sovereign even when betrayed.

When Judas finishes his greeting, Jesus responds with a calm authority: “Friend, do what you came to do.” There is no panic in his voice. No surprise. No scrambling for escape. This is not resignation. It is resolve. The arrest does not begin when the soldiers move. It begins when Jesus allows it. The One being seized is the only person in the garden who fully understands what is happening. He is not overtaken by events; he steps into them. That matters deeply. If Jesus were merely a victim of injustice, our salvation would rest on tragedy. But he is not trapped. He is obedient. He walks forward into suffering because it fulfills the Father’s will and secures the redemption of his people. In moments when life feels out of control, we are tempted to think God has lost his grip on events. But the garden reminds us that even betrayal unfolds within divine purpose. Nothing in this scene escapes the authority of Christ. Our security rests not in circumstances going our way, but in Christ reigning even when they do not.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where am I tempted to believe events are outside God’s control?
2. How does Christ’s calm authority steady my fears?

**Prayer:** Sovereign Lord, teach me to trust your rule when I do not understand your ways. Amen.

## Day 17

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:52–54

**Key Truth:** The kingdom of Christ advances through obedience, not force.

Peter reaches for his sword. It is a natural reaction. Protect the Teacher. Stop the injustice. Take control. But Jesus rebukes him. “Put your sword back into its place.” Peter assumes faithfulness means preventing suffering. Jesus reveals that faithfulness means embracing the Father’s will—even when it leads through suffering. Christ could have summoned legions of angels. The issue was never power. The issue was purpose. If salvation were accomplished by force, it would have to be sustained by force. But this kingdom comes through sacrifice. The sword represents control. The cross represents obedience. We often mirror Peter more than we admit. We want outcomes secured quickly and visibly. We reach for strategies that feel strong. Yet Christ’s strength is revealed in submission to the Father. The gospel does not move forward by coercion. It moves forward by truth, sacrifice, and love. The cross—not the sword—changes the world.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where am I tempted to rely on control rather than obedience?
2. How does the cross redefine strength in my life?

**Prayer:** Father, shape my understanding of strength by the example of your Son. Amen.

## Day 18

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:55–56

**Key Truth:** Human faithfulness fails; God's faithfulness does not.

As the crowd advances, Jesus exposes their misunderstanding. He has taught openly in the temple. He has hidden nothing. Yet they come at night with weapons, as if arresting a criminal. Then the disciples flee. The Shepherd is struck, and the sheep scatter—just as Scripture foretold. The scene ends not with courage, but with abandonment. This is painful to read. These were the men who vowed loyalty only hours before. Yet fear overtakes them. In the most decisive moment, they run. And still the plan of God stands. Our hope does not rest in the steadiness of disciples. If it did, the story would collapse here. Instead, it rests in the unwavering obedience of Christ. Even when all others fail, he remains faithful. The cross advances not because men are brave, but because God keeps his promises.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where do I see my own weakness in the disciples' flight?
2. How does Christ's faithfulness comfort me in failure?

**Prayer:** Faithful Savior, when my courage falters, anchor me in your unchanging obedience. Amen.

## Day 19

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:57–68

**Key Truth:** Truth stands firm even when falsely accused.

Jesus is brought before the religious leaders. False witnesses rise. Accusations multiply. Silence fills the room. The injustice is obvious. Yet Jesus does not defend himself in panic. He speaks when it is time to speak and remains silent when silence serves the Father's purpose. This moment reveals the cost of truth. The Holy One stands condemned by those claiming to guard holiness. The righteous Judge is judged. Christ's composure under accusation shows that vindication does not come through frantic self-defense. It comes through the Father's ultimate verdict. Believers will face misunderstanding. Faithfulness may invite criticism. But Christ has walked this path before us. His quiet strength reminds us that God's judgment—not public opinion—is decisive. The resurrection will declare who he truly is.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How do I respond when I am misunderstood or criticized?
2. What would it look like to entrust my reputation to God?

**Prayer:** Lord, give me courage to stand in truth and humility to rest in your judgment. Amen.

## Day 20

**Scripture:** Matthew 26:69–75

**Key Truth:** Even grievous failure does not place us beyond grace.

While Jesus stands firm before his accusers, Peter denies knowing him. Not once, but three times. The rooster crows. The weight of his words crashes down. He weeps bitterly. Peter's failure is not small. It is public and repeated. Yet it is not the end of his story. The contrast is sharp. Jesus remains faithful under pressure; Peter collapses under fear. But Christ goes to the cross knowing Peter's denial. He does not abandon him in response. The gospel does not erase the seriousness of sin. It confronts it honestly. But it also declares that Christ's obedience is stronger than our inconsistency. Many believers live burdened by past failure. Peter's tears remind us that repentance is real—but so is restoration. The risen Christ will seek him out. Grace is not earned by steadiness. It is secured by the Savior.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where do I carry regret that needs to be brought to Christ?
2. How does the cross give hope after failure?

**Prayer:** Merciful Lord, meet me in my weakness and restore me by your grace. Amen.

## Day 21

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:1–10

**Key Truth:** Despair without repentance leads to destruction; repentance leads to life.

Judas feels remorse. He returns the silver. He confesses, “I have sinned.” Yet his sorrow does not turn toward Christ. It turns inward. Overwhelmed by guilt, he collapses into despair. Peter also wept bitterly. But his grief, though painful, would lead him back to the Lord. The difference is not who sinned more grievously. It is where sorrow led them. Worldly sorrow ends in hopelessness. Godly sorrow leads to repentance and life. Judas saw his sin but could not believe in mercy. Peter saw his sin and eventually trusted in grace. The cross stands between these two responses. It tells us that sin is real and costly—but also that forgiveness is secured. No guilt is beyond Christ’s atonement. No shame is greater than his sacrifice. Despair whispers that there is no way back. The gospel declares that Christ himself is the way back.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Does my sorrow over sin lead me toward Christ or away from him?
2. What would it mean to trust his mercy more than my guilt?

**Prayer:** Gracious Savior, turn my sorrow into repentance and my despair into hope. Amen.

## Day 22

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:45

**Key Truth:** The darkness at the cross reveals judgment falling on Christ in our place.

From the sixth hour until the ninth, darkness covered the land. At midday, when the sun should have been strongest, the sky grew dim. Matthew does not explain how it happened. He wants us to consider what it means. In Scripture, darkness often signals divine judgment. When Egypt was struck with plague, darkness preceded deliverance. When prophets spoke of the Day of the Lord, they described a darkened sky. Now, as Jesus hangs on the cross, darkness returns—not as the end of the world, but as judgment gathered and poured out upon the Son. This is not chaos. It is not accident. It is not mere tragedy. The darkness interprets the cross. What is happening here is not simply suffering at the hands of men. It is the Holy One bearing the weight of sin. The cross shows us the seriousness of sin without minimizing it. But it also shows us the depth of mercy. Judgment does not fall on a guilty world in this moment. It falls on a willing substitute. When the sky grows dark, we are meant to understand that salvation is costly—and that Christ has entered that cost for us.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How does the darkness deepen my understanding of what Christ endured?
2. What does this reveal about both God's holiness and his mercy?

**Prayer:** Holy God, help me to see the weight of the cross and the grace that carried it. Amen.

## Day 23

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:46

**Key Truth:** In bearing our sin, Jesus entered the experience of abandonment so we would never be forsaken.

“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” These words rise from the darkness. They are not whispered. They are cried aloud. Jesus quotes Psalm 22, placing his suffering inside the promises of Scripture. Yet this is not a mere literary reference. It is a real cry from a real Savior under real judgment. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus addresses God as Father. Here he says, “My God.” The intimacy of felt nearness gives way to covenant language. The bond is not broken, but the comfort is withdrawn. The Son stands in the place of sinners and bears what we deserve. This cry does not mean the Trinity is divided. It means the Son, in perfect unity with the Father’s will, carries the weight of sin’s curse. He experiences the loneliness of judgment so that those who trust him will never be cast away. The cross is not sentimental. It is substitution. If Christ has borne this forsakenness, then no believer walks in ultimate abandonment. Even in seasons when God feels distant, the cross assures us that we are not rejected.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How does Jesus’ cry reshape my understanding of suffering?
2. Where do I need to remember that I am not ultimately forsaken?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for bearing judgment in my place. Hold me fast in your finished work. Amen.

## Day 24

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:50–51

**Key Truth:** Through Christ's death, the barrier between God and sinners is torn down.

When Jesus yields up his spirit, the curtain of the temple is torn in two—from top to bottom. The direction matters. This is not humanity reaching up. It is God reaching down. For generations, that curtain preached a message: you may come this far, but no farther. Behind it lay the Most Holy Place. Only the high priest could enter, and only once a year. Sinful people did not casually step into God's presence. But when Christ dies, the barrier falls. The tearing of the veil is not decorative symbolism. It is divine declaration. The sacrificial system has met its fulfillment. The shadow has given way to substance. Access is no longer mediated by ritual, but secured by blood—his blood. The way to God is not opened by our effort or consistency. It is opened by Christ's obedience unto death. Believers do not approach God timidly, wondering if they are allowed near. They come through a torn curtain, on a new and living way. The cross does not make access possible. It accomplishes it.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Do I live as though access to God is fragile or secure?
2. How does the torn veil strengthen my assurance in prayer?

**Prayer:** Father, thank you that through Christ I may draw near with confidence. Amen.

## Day 25

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:51–53

**Key Truth:** The death of Christ signals the beginning of new creation.

The earth shakes. Rocks split. Tombs open. Creation itself responds to the cross. When God descended on Sinai, the ground trembled. That trembling signaled the giving of the law. Now the earth shakes again—not because the law is being given, but because grace has been secured. Matthew records that tombs were opened and saints were raised after Jesus' resurrection. He does not give names or details. The point is not curiosity. It is proclamation. Death does not retain ultimate authority. The cross is not only about forgiveness of past sin. It is about the reordering of the world under a reconciled King. The grave is no longer a sealed prison. It has been entered and defeated. Christ's resurrection will be the firstfruits of a harvest. The shaking of the earth and the opening of graves announce that something decisive has happened. Where sin once reigned in death, grace now reigns through righteousness.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How does the cross reshape my understanding of death?
2. Where do I need to live with resurrection hope rather than fear?

**Prayer:** Risen Lord, anchor my hope in the victory you have secured. Amen.

## Day 26

**Scripture:** Matthew 27:54

**Key Truth:** The cross reveals who Jesus truly is.

A Roman centurion stands beneath the cross. Hardened by duty, trained to suppress sympathy, he watches the darkness, the trembling earth, and the manner of Jesus' death. Then he confesses, "Truly this was the Son of God." This is the most unlikely voice in the scene. Not a disciple. Not a priest. A soldier of the empire that crucified him. The cross does not merely accomplish salvation. It reveals identity. The Son of God is not recognized in triumph alone, but in obedient suffering. His authority is displayed not through rescue, but through surrender. The confession of the centurion anticipates the nations. The cross begins to draw the world into truthful speech about Christ. The question pressed upon every reader is simple: Who do you say that he is? The signs have been given. The verdict must be rendered.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What does the cross reveal to me about the identity of Jesus?
2. Have I personally confessed him as Lord?

**Prayer:** Son of God, open my eyes to see you rightly and my heart to confess you faithfully. Amen.

## Day 27

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:1–4

**Key Truth:** The resurrection is historical news, not religious metaphor.

Paul reminds the church of the gospel he preached: Christ died for our sins, was buried, and was raised on the third day. This is not presented as advice. It is announced as fact. Christianity is first an announcement before it is a way of life. A herald declares news that has happened. The resurrection is not a symbol of new beginnings. It is an event in history that changes everything. If Christ has not been raised, preaching is empty and faith is futile. The entire structure of Christianity stands or falls on the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Paul points to witnesses—Cephas, the Twelve, more than five hundred brothers at one time. This was not done in secret. It unfolded publicly. The empty tomb demanded explanation. Because Christ rose, forgiveness is real. Hope is secure. Death does not hold the final word.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Do I treat the resurrection as fact or metaphor?
2. How does the historicity of Easter strengthen my faith?

**Prayer:** Risen Savior, ground my hope in the reality of your victory. Amen.

## Day 28

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:5–8

**Key Truth:** The risen Christ meets failures with grace.

The first appearances of the risen Christ are not random. He appears to Peter. To the Twelve. To James. To many others. These are the same men who fled, denied, and doubted. The resurrection does not shame them. It restores them. Peter denied Christ publicly. Yet the risen Lord seeks him out. James once doubted. Yet the risen Lord reveals himself. The gospel does not erase failure by ignoring it. It overcomes it through grace. The resurrection proves that sin and fear do not get the final word over Christ's people. Restoration flows from the empty tomb. No believer stands on the basis of personal consistency. We stand on the finished work of the crucified and risen Savior.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where do I need to believe that restoration is possible?
2. How does the resurrection reshape my view of past failure?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, thank you for meeting weak disciples with steadfast mercy. Amen.

## Day 29

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:12–14

**Key Truth:** If Christ is raised, our faith is not in vain.

Paul presses the logic plainly: if there is no resurrection, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, preaching is empty and faith is futile. The Christian faith does not survive by sentiment. It stands on resurrection reality. Remove the resurrection, and the structure collapses. But Christ has been raised. Because he lives, forgiveness is secure. Because he lives, death is defeated. Because he lives, our labor in the Lord is not wasted. Everything hinges here. Easter is not an emotional high point in the church calendar. It is the decisive declaration that the crucified Savior reigns. Faith rooted in a risen Christ is not fragile optimism. It is confident trust in historical victory.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What would my faith be without the resurrection?
2. How does Christ's victory reshape my daily confidence?

**Prayer:** Living Lord, steady my faith in the power of your resurrection. Amen.

## Day 30

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:20

**Key Truth:** Christ's resurrection guarantees the resurrection of his people.

Paul calls Christ the "firstfruits." The term implies harvest. What begins in him will be completed in those who belong to him. The empty tomb is not an isolated miracle. It is the beginning of something larger. Just as the first sheaf of grain signals the coming harvest, the risen Christ guarantees the future resurrection of his people. Death remains painful. It remains an enemy. But it is a defeated enemy. The resurrection anchors Christian hope beyond changing circumstances. Our identity is not secured by achievement, status, or reputation. It is secured by belonging to the risen Lord. Nothing in this life remains unchanged. Relationships shift. Bodies weaken. Achievements fade. But union with Christ stands firm. The future is not uncertain for those who belong to him.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where am I tempted to anchor hope in temporary things?
2. How does the promise of resurrection steady me today?

**Prayer:** Father, fix my hope on the harvest secured by your Son. Amen.

## Day 31

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:55–57

**Key Truth:** Through Christ, death has lost its sting.

“O death, where is your sting?” Paul’s words are not denial of sorrow. They are declaration of victory. Death wounds deeply. It separates and grieves. Yet for those united to Christ, it no longer condemns. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But Christ has borne the curse and fulfilled the law. Because he rose, death cannot claim ultimate authority over his people. This does not remove pain from earthly loss. It removes despair. The grave is not the final chapter. Resurrection has rewritten the ending. Believers face mortality not with bravado, but with confidence grounded in Christ’s triumph. The victory is not ours by strength. It is ours by grace.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How does the resurrection change the way I face mortality?
2. Where do I need to rest in Christ’s victory rather than fear?

**Prayer:** Victorious Savior, teach me to live and die in the light of your triumph. Amen.

## Day 32

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:9–10

**Key Truth:** Grace defines who we are in Christ.

Paul describes himself as the least of the apostles, unworthy because he persecuted the church. Yet he adds, “By the grace of God I am what I am.” The resurrection transformed a persecutor into a preacher. Not because Paul improved himself, but because Christ appeared to him. Identity in Christ does not rest on past record or present performance. It rests on grace. The cross removes guilt. The resurrection establishes calling. Many believers define themselves by failures, insecurities, or accomplishments. The gospel offers a different anchor. Who we are is determined not by our worst moment or greatest achievement, but by union with the risen Lord. Grace is not fragile. It is rooted in resurrection power.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. What narrative about myself competes with the truth of grace?
2. How does Christ’s resurrection redefine my identity?

**Prayer:** Lord, let your grace shape my understanding of who I am in you. Amen.

## Day 33

**Scripture:** Romans 1:4

**Key Truth:** The resurrection declares Jesus to be the Son of God in power.

Paul writes that Jesus was declared to be the Son of God in power by his resurrection from the dead. The cross reveals humility; the resurrection reveals authority. The resurrection is not merely reversal of tragedy. It is vindication. The One condemned by men is affirmed by God. All claims Jesus made—about forgiveness, judgment, kingdom, and life—stand confirmed in the empty tomb. The resurrection is the Father's public declaration that the Son's work is complete and accepted. Because he reigns, believers do not follow a memory. They follow a living King. Christian hope is not nostalgia for a teacher. It is allegiance to a reigning Lord.

**Reflection Questions:**

1. How does the resurrection confirm Jesus' authority in my life?
2. What areas of my life resist his rightful rule?

**Prayer:** Risen King, rule over my heart with your gracious authority. Amen.

## Day 34

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:58

**Key Truth:** Labor in the Lord is never wasted because Christ is risen.

After unfolding the theology of resurrection, Paul concludes with exhortation: be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain. Resurrection shapes perseverance. Without resurrection, effort dissolves into futility. With resurrection, obedience carries eternal weight. Every act of faithfulness, however unseen, participates in a kingdom that cannot be shaken. Christ's victory assures believers that nothing done in his name is meaningless. The cross secured redemption. The resurrection guarantees its completion. Steadfastness is not fueled by anxiety, but by assurance. We do not labor to secure acceptance. We labor because acceptance has already been secured. Hope in the risen Christ produces quiet endurance.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. Where am I tempted to grow weary in faithfulness?
2. How does resurrection hope renew perseverance?

**Prayer:** Faithful Lord, strengthen me to abound in your work with confidence in your victory. Amen.

## Day 35

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 15:17–20

**Key Truth:** Christ's resurrection secures lasting hope.

If Christ has not been raised, faith is futile and we remain in our sins. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead. The resurrection means forgiveness is not theoretical. It is accomplished. It means death is not ultimate. It is defeated. It means the future of God's people is not uncertain. It is secured. Everything in Christianity flows from this truth. The last night led to the darkest day. The darkest day gave way to the third day. And the third day changed the world. Believers live between resurrection accomplished and resurrection completed. We await what has already been guaranteed. The story does not end in sorrow, nor in suspense. It ends in triumph. Christ is risen. Therefore, hope stands firm.

### **Reflection Questions:**

1. How does the resurrection anchor my long-term hope?
2. Where do I need to remember that the story ends in triumph?

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, keep my heart steady in the sure hope of your resurrection.  
Amen.

## A Closing Letter to the Church Family

Dear Church Family,

As this season of reading comes to a close, we do not leave the story behind. We carry it with us. The last night of Jesus, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection are not events we observe once a year and then move past. They are the foundation on which we stand every day.

Over these weeks, we have walked together from the upper room to the empty tomb. We have seen that Jesus did not retreat when obedience became costly, that he did not turn back when judgment fell, and that he did not remain in the grave. What we have been reminded of again and again is this: salvation has been accomplished, not imagined; secured, not suggested.

The cross tells us the truth about ourselves—that our sin is real and serious—but it also tells us the truth about God—that his mercy is deeper still. The resurrection tells us that forgiveness is not fragile, that hope is not wishful thinking, and that death does not have the final word.

If you belong to Christ, your life is now anchored in what he has already finished. Your standing with God does not rise and fall with your performance, your faithfulness, or your emotional strength. It rests on the obedience, sacrifice, and victory of Jesus Christ.

And if you are still wrestling, still asking questions, or still unsure what it means to trust him, know this: the invitation of the gospel remains open. The risen Christ is not distant or reluctant. He meets sinners with grace, doubters with patience, and the weary with rest.

As we move forward beyond Easter, my prayer is that we would not grow familiar with these truths or allow them to fade into the background of our lives. May the cross continue to humble us. May the resurrection continue to steady us. And may the love of Christ shape the way we live, serve, and hope.

Thank you for walking through this season together. May the Lord bless you and keep you, and may the grace of our risen Savior remain with you.

Grace and peace to you in Christ,

Pastor Chris