

Daily Family Devotions

The thought begins in the Bible verse;
please take the time to read it first.

FRIDAY

“CRUCIFIXION OF CHRIST”

SCRIPTURE

John 19:17-42

(Matthew 27:15-55; Mark 15:16-41; 3:26-49)

If Jesus were to have died at another time, crucifixion would not have been the manner in which he would have been put to death; the cross would not have been the symbol of his sacrifice — nor would the prophecies of the Old Testament have been fulfilled.

As we read of his terrible suffering, we wonder *why* God could have accepted such a sacrifice from his own Son!

At the very beginning of Scripture, we see that in Genesis 3:21 — in order to cover Adam and Eve's nakedness (the sudden absence of his Spirit radiating from them as an aura) — God slew an innocent animal to make skins for them. This stands as a symbol of God's compassion, *and* the first instance of a “blood sacrifice” in order to cover human sin.

Perhaps it was the vague remembrance of this event that led to the manner in which ancient civilizations practiced human and animal sacrifices to assuage their nameless guilt.

This was reprehensible to God and so he and his Son made the supreme and final sacrifice for all time and all people. (Hebrews 9:11-13)

We bow in humility for this precious gift!

Prayer: Heavenly Father, how we thank you for the unspeakable forgiveness in this selfless act of your Son! We thank you for raising him on the third day, as the promise of what you will do for those who believe...that what you have done for your Son, you grant to us also: eternal life with you in the place prepared for us through Jesus Christ, our Savior. AMEN

SATURDAY

“PREPARING FOR OUR HOLY DAY”

SCRIPTURE:

Romans 14:5-9 & Philippians 4:8-9

It takes such a small deviation in a rail switch to send an entire train plummeting off the track. And it takes such a subtle shift in our attitude to divert the significance of Easter into a casual secular get-away time.

The middle letter in the Holy Day has been replaced by the letter holiday, something the world happily accepts and enjoys.

As Christians who love Christ, are we becoming more secular in our own practice and attitude? We and our families also enjoy this special time — often without sharing with others its importance to us. Have we who love Christ lost the special awe of the empty tomb and what Christ's Resurrection *really* signifies to us? Remember the wonderment of the disciples who first saw it?

Your children will remember your example and repeat it later in their own lives. Unless they have heard you share the meaning of Easter comfortably and sincerely, they will probably never know the joy of telling their friends.

Our personal witness and behavior at this time can have a profound impact . . . making Easter a time to turn toward God and ponder this marvelous thing he has given us . . . eternal life!

Prayer: Precious Lord, it is so easy to use for our own pleasure those days which you have given us to remember you. Our Sundays, our Holy Days — even our time each day to be with you is often preempted by our daily busy-ness. Forgive us, Lord. AMEN

MONDAY, MARCH 25, 2024

SCRIPTURE:

John 12:12-19

(Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; Luke 19:29-44)

As Jesus entered Jerusalem riding “on a young ass”, people were lining the road, waving palm branches and laying them before him as they shouted hosannas.

They were celebrating his approaching coronation, believing he had come as their king to destroy Roman rule and lead them to freedom and political power.

Little did they realize that his coronation would be a mockery — his crown made not of gold but terrible thorns pressed upon his head; that people would mock *them* for believing.

Jesus understood the bewilderment they would suffer . . . that in just a few days this same joyous crowd would turn into an angry mob demanding his crucifixion.

As the soldiers took him they watched as he was mocked, whipped, stripped of his clothing. And as he stumbled under the weight of his own cross, their shock and despair turned into bitter disappointment . . . and they became angry.

And when Jesus was being crucified they joined the others — cursing and berating him.

Yet as Jesus hung dying on the cross, he said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do . . .” Nor could they know: the priests and Pharisees, refusing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah, had scorned him, called him an imposter, condemned him openly.

What a loss for his own people.

Prayer: Dear Christ, how we thank you for making this final sacrifice for us. No longer do we need to sacrifice our sons and daughters on pagan altars to assuage our guilt, our imperfection. Help us to think of this each time we kneel to ask forgiveness, assured of your love and divine understanding. Lord, how we thank you! AMEN

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TUESDAY

“THE PASSEOVER . . . THE LAST SUPPER”

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 22:1-6; 14-18

(Matthew 26:20-25; Mark 14:176-21)

Many of us do not realize that this “Last Supper” — which Believers commemorate as our Holy Communion — was the celebration of the Jewish Passover. Jesus, as a Jew, cherished it as an intimate moment usually shared with family or close friends.

It was at this time he told his Disciples what was to come: his impending death (which they could not believe; he was the Messiah — how could he die?)

He also told them that this night marked the beginning of a new covenant between them and God. As he filled the Cup of Elijah — which traditionally was not drunk but left — he told them each to drink from it as he had done. This special cup was a symbol of the new covenant, heralding the age when The Christ would come to claim his Kingdom and peace would reign for a thousand years.

Even though the disciples obeyed, they still were unable to grasp the significance of all he had shared with them. Not until much later did they finally realize the impact it would have on them and the entire world around them.

Prayer: Dear Father, how grateful and humble we are for this beautiful New Covenant that you have given us! Your dear Son's sacrifice for our atonement is so often taken for granted. Too often as we kneel before you, we forget the agony and selflessness which brought grace and forgiveness to us. Thank you, Lord. AMEN

WEDNESDAY

“CHRIST'S AGONY IN GETHSEMANE”

SCRIPTURE:

Matthew 26:39-46

(Mark 14:32-43; Luke 22:39-46)

Following his supper, and knowing this night he would be betrayed by Judas and taken away by the soldiers, Jesus asked his disciples to go with him to the Mount of Olives — the Garden of Gethsemane where he often went to pray.

When they arrived Jesus asked them to pray with him, for he was in great agony at this hour — realizing that he would be separated from his Father for the first time as he took on the sins of the world. This will always be a mystery to us, but to Jesus it would mean salvation and forgiveness.

He went apart to pray, and each time as he looked up, he saw that the men were all sleeping . . . and in very human distress, he said, “Could you not have prayed with me for just an hour?”

But by then, Judas followed by soldiers came to give him the kiss of betrayal and Jesus was bound and led from the garden.

We wonder now how the disciples could not have heard his hunger for their support and prayers at this time . . . they still did not believe nor understand what he had told them.

Prayer: Dear Lord, so often when we have been led to pray for someone for comfort or support, we, too, have flagged. We ask your forgiveness and pray for discernment and eager obedience — for your sake. AMEN

THURSDAY

“CHRIST'S TRIAL AND CONVICTION”

SCRIPTURE:

Luke 22:54-71; 23:1-25

(Matthew 26:47-56; Mark 14:43-50; John 18:1-11)

This portion begins with Peter's denial of Christ. When Jesus had warned him earlier that “before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times”. Peter swore that this could never happen.

Yet not much later — unable to bear the ridicule of the group in the courtyard, Peter vehemently denied he even knew Jesus — and a cock crowed just as Jesus passed by on the parapet. As he glanced down at Peter — not with anger but with compassion — Peter broke down and wept.

Shortly after, the Roman magistrates, seeing no guilt in Jesus, handed him over to the Jewish leaders who, following the mob's frenzy, demanded Jesus be crucified. They were unable to forgive him for not coming as their king.

Even when Jesus stood before the magistrates, the people waited for him to assert himself, demonstrate his power; yet he stood silent before them — his hands bound — and offered no defense.

And again the people demanded he be put to death.

Prayer: Dear Lord, how often we fail to pray for daily strength for our own commitment to you — and we wonder why we fail so often to meet the many needs and challenges we face daily. Please help us to realize that your Spirit is as essential to us as breathing. Give us each day some way in which we can share your love and compassion. AMEN