

**EPHESIANS 6: 10 – 17****Ash Wednesday**

*Be strong in the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. For we are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against these mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.*

Have you ever had a day when you felt like everyone and everything was working against you? Well, you might have been right! However, it wasn't really the people or the circumstances that were wreaking havoc in your life. It might have appeared that way, but it was really the dark forces of the unseen world causing your struggle. Every day we are in spiritual warfare with the unseen forces of evil. There is constantly a battle of good versus evil being fought all around us and within us. Satan attacks through people, illness, doubts, fears, conflict, and anywhere he feels we are weak and vulnerable. In order to thwart these attacks, God gives us his full armor of protection, which is faith, truth (the Word), peace, salvation, the sword of the Spirit, and prayer. When we prepare ourselves by putting on God's full armor, we are ready to fight off Satan's attacks when they come. Prepare yourself by staying in the Word, knowing God's truth, keeping the faith, and being in constant prayer even before the enemy attacks.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, thank you for giving us your armor to defeat the enemy, and help us remember to put it on and use it. In Jesus name, Amen*

Tammy Kitzmiller

## PSALM 46: 1 – 3

## Day 1

*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.*

*Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10*

No matter how small or large the problem, God is **always** the answer. Sometimes we take His strength for granted. We place His presence on the back burner and rely on Him only when we exhaust all other resources. But the truth is that we were designed to need God for every little thing that hits our day, so that we can stay in constant union with Him. Because we are in the habit of *doing*, we need to remember where our real strength comes from and be dependent on His power in us. We need to put our focus on God, not the problem. We need to take the time to “be still and know that He is God.” We need to turn to Him first, not last, and **not** rely on our own strength. We can get better results relying on God and conquer the situation with ease instead of struggling. We just need to be still and listen, and know that He is in control. We need to trust Him. The world can fall down around us, but He will hold us up because **He** is our fortress.

*Please read Psalm 46 in its entirety as I chose to use only a few verses from it. Reading it would be a great way to put your focus on God’s almighty power available to us.*

Tammy Kitzmiller

**ROMANS 5: 1 – 5****Day 2****Suffering . . . Perseverance . . . Character . . . Hope**

Why do we have to suffer? Let us first consider Jesus' suffering on the cross. He experienced physical pain, yet what was worse was watching his mother be tormented by his imminent death. This caused Jesus a great deal of pain because he loved his mother. God, the Father, also watched that scene from above. I know as a parent how difficult it is to watch your child suffer and not being able to do anything about it. Therefore, God and Jesus both suffered as Jesus hung on that cross for our sins. Thankfully, they both knew the ending of the story. They knew what good would come as a result of this tribulation. The door to heaven was opened for all people. On the other hand, when we suffer, we usually can't see the good that might come out of that pain. At that moment, there seems to be no relief beyond our current affliction. In Romans 5, verses 1 - 5 describe how we can rejoice in our suffering. Suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.

In one of my favorite hymns, Earl Marlatt asks, "Are ye able to be crucified with me?". His question reaches beyond the Easter story because we all have our own cross to bear. You don't need to feel like you have to bear that burden all by yourself. We have a church family who will support you in prayer and by providing tangible help in times of need. So, are you able to be crucified along with Jesus?

Dee Hertzog

## **MATTHEW 28: 16 – 20**

## **Day 3**

What a surprise for the disciples to see Jesus alive after being crucified! They could hardly believe their eyes after all He had been through. No wonder there was doubt. Nothing this extreme had ever happened. The disciples met with Jesus in Galilee, where it all began with them. Now it would come full circle seeing him as God-like, commanding them with their continued works and journeys. Jesus parting words are commonly referred to as “The Great Commission.” The scriptures imply this recommendation for communal identity (communion) and life together for the progression that will become the church.<sup>1</sup> Scripture highly suggest four points OR four ALLS:<sup>1</sup>

**1** *God has given ALL authority to Jesus, both Heaven and Earth.*

**2** *We are to make disciples of ALL nations, namely to unite with all people of all races.* **3** *We are to teach that we should obey ALL Jesus commanded during his earthly life.* **4** *The promise, lastly, that Jesus will ALWAYS be with us unto the end of time.*

These aspects indicate much of the message that is being conveyed and central message of the book of Matthew.

The Lord is finally revealed in this passage. The disciples have seen him as Everlasting, Almighty, and Immortal.\* They listen for further assignments for their missions. The promise that Jesus will be with us always until the end of time is powerful. This is the best story of Resurrection because of “The Great Commission section.”<sup>2</sup> This section is listed only in Matthew. I did not find it in the other Gospels. It is wonderful to know that we can always talk to Jesus and He is always there for us.

<sup>1</sup> Richard Beaton, Principal of De Pree Leadership Center and Associate Professor of New Testament, Fuller Theological, A sermon on the web, referring to this passage of scripture, 2017.

<sup>2</sup> Pastor Sager’s Tuesday Morning Bible Study.

**JOHN 1: 1 – 14****Day 4**

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning the light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

I love the Gospel of John. To me, it's beautifully poetic. What these verses speak to me is that Jesus was there with God since the beginning. Jesus is the Word, and Jesus is God. Everything that was made was made through Jesus. He was there at Creation. He is the light, and the darkness of evil cannot put his light out. He is the light for us and in us. John the Baptist came before Jesus to prepare us for the coming of the light. When the light came to earth in the flesh, his own people did not receive him, and the world did not recognize him. But the people who did receive him and continue to receive him are made children of God. His glory has been revealed through his death and resurrection. Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life. (John 14:6)

Tammy Kitzmiller

**MATTHEW 3: 13 –17 (KJV)****Day 5**

<sup>13</sup> Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. <sup>14</sup> But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?

<sup>15</sup> And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. <sup>16</sup> And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: <sup>17</sup> And lo a voice from heaven, saying, this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

How many times have we all felt unworthy? Can you imagine how unworthy John felt when Jesus approached him to be baptized? John was baptizing the common people of the day who wanted to repent. Then Jesus, the son of God, approaches John and made this request. No one compelled Jesus to be baptized. He came to John of His own choice. Jesus wanted to identify with the sinful people. Jesus stood in the place of sinful man and bore the sins of many. What better way for Jesus to show his love of humanity but to do as the commoners did?

The spirit of God was much pleased by his son's baptism by one of his strongest believers. Jesus sent a powerful message that he also was of sin and no better than any of the other people lining the edge of the water. Let us all remember that we are all sinners but through our baptism we are filled with the spirit of God just like Jesus was on the day of his baptism.

Wendy Noel

**MARK 15: 33 – 39****Day 6**

*"And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, 'Truly this man was the son of God.'" Mark 15: 37 – 39*

Moses was told to take off his shoes when he approached the holy ground of the burning bush. We must approach the cross of the crucified Jesus with awe.

Darkness had settled over the land. For three hours the sun hid in sorrow. From the depth of his suffering Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?"

When Jesus gave out a loud cry and breathed his last, "the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom." The curtain that had separated people from the presence of God in the Holy of Holies had been torn apart. God could no longer be contained there. God was now loose in the world.

At the baptism of Jesus we were told that the heavens were "torn apart," and the Spirit descended on Jesus like a dove. (Mark 1: 10) As the heavens were torn apart so that the Spirit could descend on Jesus, so the curtain of the temple was torn apart so that the Spirit could descend on people everywhere. The Spirit who descends on people is the Spirit who was in Jesus. The God who is loose in our world is the God revealed in the face of Jesus Christ. God is present with us, always, to help and forgive and heal us as Jesus did his followers.

*Come, Spirit of the living God, live within me. I look at the cross and stand in awe of your love.*

Pastor Sager

**Jesus Is Laid In the Tomb**

*<sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.*

Jesus has been crucified. All seems to be lost. Where are the thousands who adored him, his believers and followers? Where are his devoted disciples who followed him daily? Here are two influential men who secretly loved Jesus and are now tenderly caring for his body. They brought spices and wrapped him in a linen cloth. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a prominent Jewish religious leader came to Jesus at night to seek knowledge. Notice he came at night, secretly because of fear of becoming an outcast. Joseph of Arimathea was a wealthy man, a respected Jewish council member. He gave his own tomb for Jesus' burial.

During Jesus' life both men sensed in their hearts that Jesus was the Messiah. But it took his death to change them from secret followers, to openly confirming their beliefs and putting them into action. They were transformed by his death.

When we ponder Jesus' life, sacrifice and love for us, we too should be transformed, proclaiming who he is by putting our faith into action. Are you a secret believer? You can choose to hide your faith or let others know you are following Jesus

## **ACTS 1: 6 – 11**

## **Day 8**

*"And when he had said this, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight."*

Acts 1:9

Jesus was lifted up, the Bible tells us, lifted up to the sky, where a cloud removed him from sight. We call it his "ascension" to heaven. As if in a triumphant procession, Jesus rode up to heaven, back to the God who had sent him to earth.

Why? So that instead of being in one place at one time, he could be everywhere all the time. "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) He was in the blaze of light that Saul saw on the road to Damascus, transforming him into the apostle to the gentiles. He was in the vision of animals that Peter saw in the house in Joppa, leading him to Cornelius and the mission to the world. He was in the apocalyptic sights and sounds that John saw on the island of Patmos, moving him to write of God's ultimate victory over evil.

Jesus is our Emmanuel, God with us, wherever we are, all the time. Remember we live in the shelter of the Most High. God is our refuge and our fortress, in God we can trust.



Pastor Sager

## I THESSALONIANS 5: 1 – 11

Day 9

Every day the unexpected can happen. You are driving along when all of a sudden you have a flat tire and your day is altered. Or you have a call about the loss of a friend or family member and your planned day lost its light and your heart is heavy. On a cold winter day, a pipe breaks and your home is flooded. All your once important items are now trash. These unexpected situations come on you "like a thief in the night" catching you off-guard and altering your life.

Today's scripture of Jesus' return will be like that unexpected day to all mankind but as Christians, those watching for his return, we should not be surprised. As stated in verse 4 and 5 "But dear Brothers you are not in the dark about these things (Jesus' return) and you won't be surprised as by a thief when that day comes. For you are all children of the light. ..."

As we journey through life be on guard and alert to the signs of his coming. Be vigilant in your watch. Stay strong in your faith until you meet Jesus face-to-face. As verse 10 from the Living Bible states "he died for us so that we can live with him forever, whether we are dead or alive at the time of his return." That glorious day of his return will bring all of us face-to-face with our savior, Jesus.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, help us to stay strong in our faith. Give us strength in this dark world to be your beacon of light as we watch for your son's return. Thank you, Lord, for never giving up on us and sending us a savior. We look forward to the day of his return. Amen*

Joyce West

## HEBREWS 12: 1 – 2

Day 10

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The first century church suffered severe persecution and this letter is in that setting. The people being addressed are thinking of abandoning their faith. They are being encouraged to hold on to Christ as Savior and Lord.<sup>1</sup>

Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus Christ is the mediator of God's grace. It also encourages them to keep on going in their faith. The first sentence talks about a "great cloud," meaning a large group of people. The book of Hebrews was written to a church that was getting old and settling into the world and drifting through life without focus, without vigilance and without energy. The people were weak and tired. It was easier to meander in the crowd than run an important race, as life.<sup>2</sup>

However, it is stated to ignore those hindrances or offbeat paths, and continue to run the righteous race. Let us stay fixed on Jesus, who suffered and died for our sins.

Believers today should be encouraged and stimulated by acts of faith, books written about faithful journeys or significant, important speakers like Billy Graham. There is a lot of great Christian music, which is inspiring.

Get rid of things that hinder or take you away from God.  
Live in Peace. Praise the Lord!

<sup>1</sup> Women's Devotional Bible

<sup>2</sup> New International Version, 1995.

## ISAIAH 6: 1 – 8

## Day 11

<sup>1</sup> In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. <sup>2</sup> Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. <sup>3</sup> And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." <sup>4</sup> At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. <sup>5</sup> "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." <sup>6</sup> Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. <sup>7</sup> With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." <sup>8</sup> Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Isaiah's name means "The Lord Saves." He was commissioned by God to lead the rebellious Israel back to God. The voice of the Lord said, "Whom shall I send?" and "Who will go for us?" And Isaiah said, "Here am I, send me!" Don't we all like to think that we would rise up to obey God's commands, to carry his truth to a hurting world? It is way easier said than done. I have at different times in my past thought I was following God's will and later found that I was mistaken. I had read or heard God's commands all wrong. We need to pray diligently and discern just what God really wants us to do. That is why constant prayer, studying God's Word, and learning from other Christians helps us to be able to walk on the right path of service. It is not a once and done deal. It's a daily commitment. It's a lifelong commitment!

Lucy Halter

## GENESIS 17: 1 – 8

## Day 12

*"When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. I will give to you, and to your offspring after you, the land where you are now an alien, all the land of Canaan; for a perpetual holding; and, I will be their God."*

Jimmy Carter was a devout Christian. He hosted a summit meeting at Camp David. One of the attendees was Egypt's Anwar Sadat. Mr. Sadat was a devout Muslim. Also in attendance was Menachim Begin from Israel. He was a devout Jew. Jews, Muslims, and Christians all claim Abraham as their father in the faith. Jews and Christians trace their ancestry back to Isaac. Muslims trace their ancestry back to Ishmael. If God's covenant with Abraham is going to bear fruit, Jews, Muslims, and Christians must begin to trust each other. They must act as brothers and sisters instead of enemies. How attuned to the teaching of Jesus is your attitude toward Jews and Muslims?

*I look to a time when brotherhood needs no publicity, to a time when a brotherhood award would be as ridiculous as an award for getting up in the morning. Daniel D. Mich*

Michael Crawford

**MARK 3: 13 – 19****Day 13**

*"He went up the mountain and called to him those whom he wanted, and they came to him. And he appointed twelve, whom he also named apostles, to be with him, and to be sent out to proclaim the message, and to have authority to cast out demons. So he appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is Sons of Thunder); and Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.*

Jesus called James and John *boanerges*, which may be translated "hotheads." They were hardly the kind of persons you would expect to lead others to holiness. Matthew was a tax collector, someone who collaborated with Rome. You would not expect him to lead others to holiness. Simon was a member of the Zealot party. This was a group of terrorists dedicated to liquidating every Roman soldier throughout the Jewish lands. You would not expect him to be the kind of person to lead others to holiness. Jesus saw beyond what people were, to what they were capable of being. Follow his example. To what extent do I try to see beyond people — from what they are to what they are capable of being? Who is one person, especially, who needs me to do this?

*The flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today.* CHINESE PROVERB

Michael Crawford

## **GALATIANS 5: 16 – 26**

## **Day 14**

The pull of the world versus the power of the Holy Spirit are so evident in our lives and in the world. In our lives, it's the voices of that good angel and bad devil talking in our ears every day.

In the world, we see that struggle being played out in politics, workplace, relationships, Etc. The lack of understanding or willingness to follow God's plan mislead many to "lean on their own understanding" of what is "right" in their own eyes. Man's Wisdom vs. God's truth is that battle every day and is seen playing out in the headlines of the day.

How do we know it's God's truth? In today's scripture, it tells us that God sent his Holy Spirit, the mind of God, to guide us. So that our lives will produce the fruit of the spirit "love, joy, peace, patience, . . ." This can only happen if we turn our lives over to Christ, learn about God through the Bible and let his Spirit control our lives. God's truth is spelled out in his word. It is our responsibility as Christians to live by it and not rephrase or distort it to make it fit today's foolish man-made messages. If we are following the Holy Spirit, the fruits of the spirit will be evident in our lives and we will be in conflict with worldly views.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, Create in us a clean heart, filled with your Holy Spirit. Open our minds and hearts to your truths that we can see your thoughts and know your ways. Give us strength and guidance to live by your plan every day with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

Joyce West

**MATTHEW 25: 31 – 46**

**Day 15**

**Feed My Sheep . . . Feed My Goats**

Have you ever been to a petting zoo? Would you rather feed the sheep or the goats? The sheep are usually very gentle while the goats are known for eating almost anything, including your shirt tail. In Matthew 25:31 – 46, Jesus talks about the final judgment and separating people from one another like the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.

*Then the King will say to those on his right, Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance ... For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat ... Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you? ... I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.*

Let me propose that you perform a not-so-random act of kindness during this season of Lent. Consider doing an act of kindness towards someone who is not so deserving of your kindness. Think of the person who has been mean to you, the coworker who annoys you, or the neighbor who allows his dog to do his business in your yard. What can we do for others who are undeserving? Wouldn't they be considered one of the least of these?

Did you know that both sheep and goats can learn to follow a master? So, when Jesus told Peter to feed my sheep, shouldn't we also feed his goats?

Dee Hertzog

**PSALM 95: 1 –7 (NLT)****Day 16**

*“Come, let us sing to the Lord! Let us shout joyfully to the Rock of our Salvation. Let us come to him with thanksgiving. Let us sing psalms of praise to him. For the Lord is a great God, a great King above all Gods. He holds in his hands the depths of the earth and mightiest mountains. The sea belongs to him, for he made it. His hands formed the dry land, too. Come, let us worship and bow down. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker, for he is our God. We are the people he watches over, the flock under his care. If only you would listen to his voice today!”*

I don't know who wrote Psalm 95, but I believe the Holy Spirit was there to help. I feel we tend to forget what we are taught on Sunday. So, this clear simple text teaches us what we ought to do.

We should come before him with joy, thanksgiving and praise. Worship him with the voice, the body, the mind. Whatever we have, offer it to him. The deaf have their hands. The body paralyzed has its mind. Fortunately, most of us have our voice. Use it to extol him. Bow humbly before him. Acknowledge his mighty hand that created the highest mountains and the deepest sea. The dry lands and the green pastures. He who is above all Kings. Then, listen! Listen for the voice of the gentle Shepherd. He will call out and guide us safely back to the flock when wondering too far away.

In our scripture reading try replacing the word us with me. Replace the word you with I. In doing so, I pray for his voice to speak to you as he has with me.

Cindy Klinedinst

## PSALM 8

Day 17

<sup>1</sup>*LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory in the heavens.*

<sup>2</sup>*Through the praise of children and infants you have established a stronghold against your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.* <sup>3</sup>*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,*

<sup>4</sup>*what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them?* <sup>5</sup>*You have made them a little lower than the angels<sup>[i]</sup> and crowned them with glory and honor.* <sup>6</sup>*You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their<sup>[a]</sup> feet:* <sup>7</sup>*all flocks and herds, and the animals of the wild,* <sup>8</sup>*the birds in the sky, and the fish in the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.* <sup>9</sup>*LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!*

David points out two things that really impressed him:

- (1) The glory of God shone in the starry heavens.
- (2) God lifts us humans to just under him and makes us lords of the creatures he created.

Doesn't the beauty and splendor of Nature make us feel closer to God? We realize how generous and loving God is in that he created the vast varieties of animals, birds, fish, trees, flowers, just for our delight and pleasure. I watch the birds in our backyard at the various feeders in the snow-covered outdoors and just marvel how well God equipped them to withstand the cold of winter.

God equips us so much more to withstand the ups and downs of life if we only put our trust in God and let God guide us. We don't have what it takes to make it on our own. We have to rely on God's guidance, strength and love for each one of us. Amazing grace!

Lucy Halter

**PSALM 104: 1, 10 – 24**

**Day 18**

*How many are your works, LORD!*

*In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures. Psalm 104:24*

If you ever need to be reminded of what to be thankful for, take a look at nature. The birds and creatures of the earth are so wonderfully made. They spend every waking moment searching for food, providing for their families, and protecting their family from predators.

God has been busy creating so many animals with so many different traits, and yet he is able to provide for them all. How great is our God!

His great works remind us that God has thought of everything. Therefore, he will not forget our needs, as he hasn't forgotten the needs of any of the creatures he has made.

I encourage you to take time today to not only praise the Lord for all of his majestic works, but also to put your trust in him know that all your needs will be taken care of.

# PRAISE GOD!

Trisha Cuffley

## **PSALM 13**

## **Day 19**

We have all been in times of despair that it makes it difficult to remember when times were good. This makes it hard to see when the end will come, or what the outcome will be.

We have to remember that this is the nature of trials and storms. We have to have faith, instead of asking “where is God.” When we are going through a trial we have negative thoughts and we fight with our emotions. Our minds tell us to give up, give in and tell us that things are not truthful. When things are going bad there are plenty of others to pile on the pain. Our enemies mainly come from the spiritual warfare that we are engaged in. We must be prepared, understanding that if we want to be godly we will have a fight on our hands and we will have many enemies

No matter what situation may come upon us, the first thing we must do is pray. Prayer is not simply asking God for something, but asking God to answer according to His will. We don't understand why we endure the things that we go through. We need to ask God to open our eyes to see life as He sees it. Trust in Gods unfailing love. He is always there and meets evert need. We have reason to trust in the Lord and have hope for tomorrow because of the Lords unfailing love. No matter what happens, we can be grateful!

Carolyn Ruby Tracy

## PSALM 24

## Day 20

The Lord is powerful and almighty with creation of all things. He created heavens and earth. The Lord created day and night. He created all animals, including sea creatures, birds, and wild animals. The Lord created man, woman, land and sea. He divided the land and seas so they would be separated forming land divisions and sea divisions.

Follow his footsteps for Christ has already climbed the holy hill. The Spirit of God will provide a new clean heart and righteous spirit for those who follow. The way is paved for us. This is an actual account of entrance of Christ into Heaven.<sup>1</sup>

We have an interest to know God and obtain His goodness and rely upon God. Those who seek Him are favorably in his close relationship.

Lift up your heads, meaning heavenly things above, and not on earthly things. Open your doors wide, so that God may enter and you follow Him. In ancient times, doors were open wide for certain people.<sup>2</sup>

The King of Glory is powerful and strong who can conquer all. He is our protector and a mighty conqueror. We should take note of the tide of celestial blessedness which helps us to rise up high and higher still, to be more like Christ.

Again, rise high with God, open your doors and follow Him. Great is the Lord God. Amen!

<sup>1</sup> John Gill. He preached over one hundred years ago in the same church as C.H. Spurgeon.

**ROMANS 8: 18 – 25**

**Day 21**

I am the hope of glory in you,  
The one who walks beside you,  
Holding you by the hand.  
The one who lives within you,  
Who shelters you from the rain.

I am in you,  
And you are in me.  
Nothing can separate us,  
And *nothing*,  
Can pluck you from my hand.

I am your hope.  
I am your refuge.  
I am your light.  
I am your rescue.

Spending time together,  
Will heighten your awareness.  
You will feel my presence,  
And my joy will be your strength.

Remain in me,  
And I will remain in you.

I am the vine.  
You are the branches.  
Together we will produce good fruit.  
Apart from me you can do nothing,  
But with me, *nothing* is impossible for you.

And if the world will hate you,  
All because of me,  
Remember you don't belong to this world.  
You belong to me.

Tammy Kitzmiller

*<sup>14</sup> The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified concerning him, He cried out, saying, "This is the one I spoke about when I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.'" ) <sup>16</sup> Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.*

During this Lenten season we need to remember what John said, when he cried out saying, He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.

I believe that John realized that the one and only Son was God himself in the flesh and this is why it is so important to our Christian faith. God showed his love among us by sending his one and only Son into the world that we may live through him. We as sinners do not deserve God's love, but Jesus took our sins upon himself to make us worthy of God's love. Jesus is the light shining in the darkness. He tells us the truth about God, about ourselves and the world. Praise his holy name each and every day during this Lenten Season.

**I JOHN 4: 7 – 12****Day 23**

*Let us continue to love one another, for love comes from God. Anyone who loves is born of God and knows God. But anyone who does not love does not know God – for God is love.*

We can glorify our heavenly Father by showing love to others. As Christians, we are called to stand out, not blend in. The best way to do this is to follow God's command to love one another as He has loved us. If we love one another, others see God in us — a kind word, a helping hand, a smile, hospitality, generosity, compassion, acknowledgement, listening, a card, a deed. There are numerous ways to share our love every day. I've heard it said that we should leave people better than we found them. Be the sunshine in someone's dark world. Defend the underdog. Hug the hurting. Kiss the broken. Befriend the lost. Love the lonely. You may be the only light in someone's life. We should spend our time building people up, encouraging and nurturing others. We should have a giving, forgiving, understanding and non-judgmental heart.

*“People might forget what you said, forget what you did, but they will never forget the way you made them feel.”* Maya Angelou

Tammy Kitzmiller

**Prayer Is Asking, Seeking, and Knocking**

*"Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone? Or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him!"*

There are some benefits that come to us whether we ask for them or not. The sun shines. The rain falls. The flowers bloom. The grass grows. Believers and non-believers enjoy these things without praying. But with other things, God invites us to pray. The word "ask" speaks of desire and means to call for. Do you really call on God for your needs? Too many people just "window shop" when they pray. They do not call for anything and they do not come back with anything. The word "search" means a desire with deeds. Sometimes when we ask, God says "Yes." Other times, He says "No." That is when we must search for the reason. Maybe what we asked for was not good for us and that is why it was not given. Maybe we were not good and when we search, we find the sin in our lives. The word "knock" suggests doggedness. Whatever the delays, difficulties, disappointments, or discouragements, do not stop praying. If you walk uprightly, the answer will come. Be persistent in your praying.

Michael Crawford

**Jesus Blesses the Children**

*One day some parents brought their children to Jesus so he could touch them and bless them, but the disciples told them not to bother him. But when Jesus saw what was happening, he was very displeased with his disciples. He said to them "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I assure you, anyone who doesn't have their kind of faith will never get into the Kingdom of God." Then he took the children into his arms and placed his hands on their heads and blessed them.*

In Jesus' time it was customary for parents to bring their children to the local Rabbi for a blessing. The disciples must have felt that Jesus did not have enough time to spend with these children. Perhaps they saw the children as being of lesser importance than the many others waiting to see him. But Jesus saw the children's trusting hearts. They had a simple faith and belief in him. Jesus knew that some people wanted to know him because of his healing powers, to be part of his growing fame and popularity, or perhaps to be elevated to a higher status among their peers. The children did not have any such aspirations. They only wanted to trust and believe in him and receive his blessing. Jesus doesn't look at outward appearances, wealth, status, knowledge or importance. He wants humble hearts that truly want to love and serve him. He looks at our hearts, our genuine faith, trust and obedience to him. What a relief to realize that we don't have to know all the answers! We can take great comfort in this thought. You don't have to be the best or most important, you only need to trust and have faith in his infinite loving care.

Linda Huggens

## I CORINTHIANS 2: 6 – 16

Day 26

Have you ever tried to talk to someone about the blessings of your faith only to receive a blank or confused look? It can be so hard to explain the joy and guidance we receive through our relationship with Christ to a nonbeliever. To them, it sounds foolish. Today's scripture reminds us of God's Gift of Love. Not only when He sent his Son to die for our sins but also giving us the Holy Spirit, "His thoughts."

He has shared his "deepest secrets" with only believers. His ways sound foolish to the man-made beliefs of our world. Such as "put others before yourself" not the world's "me first" life, God's "love others, even our enemies" not man's way to get revenge on enemies, God's Plan of Salvation through Christ verses men's good deeds only to get to heaven, God's command to not sin even though it goes against our sinful nature vs the world's "if it feels good to you and you can get away with it, do it."

Yes, as Christians in following God's ways, many people will not understand us. There will be times of conflict because of it. With love and patience, share the Good News and take time to share God's thoughts with those around you. With the Holy Spirit's help the words will come and hearts can be open to receive God's grace and wisdom.

**Prayer:** *Dear Father, Thank you for sharing your ways through the Holy Spirit. Give us guidance to use your thoughts to live a godly life. Strengthen us to be bold in our faith and daily walk as conflict with the world will take place. Through love, give us the words and actions to help others find a relationship with you. Amen*

Joyce West

## I JOHN 1: 1 – 4 (TLB)

Day 27

*<sup>1</sup> Christ was alive when the world began, yet I myself have seen him with my own eyes and listened to him speak. I have touched him with my own hands. He is God's message of life. <sup>2</sup> This one who is life from God has been shown to us, and we guarantee that we have seen him; I am speaking of Christ, who is eternal Life. He was with the Father and then was shown to us. <sup>3</sup> Again I say, we are telling you about what we ourselves have actually seen and heard, so that you may share the fellowship and the joys we have with the Father and with Jesus Christ his son. <sup>4</sup> And if you do as I say in this letter, then you, too, will be full of joy, and so will we.*

The arm of John's message was to testify that Christ is real. John saw him, heard him, and touched him with his own hands.

John wanted us to know that Jesus is eternal. He also wants us to know that Jesus message of eternal life through him is real for us.

John's aim was to produce fellowship with man and with God.

The Christian message has two great aims, love for our fellowman and love for God.

If we are ever to find fellowship with one another and with God, and if we are ever to find true joy, we must find them in Christ Jesus, our Lord and Savior.

I pray that this will be so for all of us.

Pat Klinedinst

**PSALM 139: 1 – 12****Day 28**

*<sup>1</sup> You have searched me, LORD, and you know me. <sup>2</sup> You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. <sup>3</sup> You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. <sup>4</sup> Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely. <sup>5</sup> You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me. <sup>6</sup> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. <sup>7</sup> Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? <sup>8</sup> If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. <sup>9</sup> If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, <sup>10</sup> even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast. <sup>11</sup> If I say, "Surely the darkness will hide me and the light become night around me," <sup>12</sup> even the darkness will not be dark to you; the night will shine like the day, for darkness is as light to you.*

There is no place we can go that God is not with us. He knows our thoughts and our words before we speak. No matter what we have planned for our life, it's really God's plan. We may stumble or fall, but God is there to lift us up and hold us in his loving arms. God gave us his only son to be the light of the world and then for him to die on the cross so we can have life eternal. May we look more to God and less to our own selves. Put Jesus first and love him with our whole heart. God knows us each by name and sees us. Hope and salvation is ours today!

Our God is an awesome God!

Sue Brumgard

**Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Growth**

“When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God’s love and keep you strong. And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ, even though it is too great to fully understand. Then you will be made complete with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”

As you read this section of Ephesians, keep in mind the apostle Paul is still in a prison cell. What is on his mind? His freedom? His prison conditions? No. He is only thinking of the heart of others. Those to whom he had already shared the amazing love and power of God, the good news of Christ. He must have realized people would struggle if not lifted up in prayer and reminding them to stay strong in the Lord. Continue with their spiritual growth so they too will understand the dimension of God’s love. His Son, stretched on a wooden cross.

Let us pray for the spiritual growth of us all. To be strengthened in God’s word. To be encouraged with love and understanding beyond all reason. To be made complete in the fullness of His love.

## SONG OF SONGS 2: 8 – 13

Day 30

<sup>8</sup>The voice of my beloved! Behold, he comes leaping upon the mountains, Skipping upon the hills. <sup>9</sup> My beloved is like a gazelle or a young stag. Behold, he stands behind our wall; he is looking through the windows, Gazing through the lattice. <sup>10</sup> My beloved spoke, and said to me: "Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away. <sup>11</sup> For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. <sup>12</sup> The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing has come, and the voice of the turtledove is heard in our land. <sup>13</sup> The fig tree puts forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grapes give a good smell. Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away!

The common way of looking at the Song of Solomon is as an allegory. It portrays the love relationship between Christ and His Bride, the church. A more recent interpretation suggests it is a literal description of the joys of sexual intimacy. I think both interpretations are valid, but I am more interested in the spiritual for the purpose of this devotion. I believe the Holy Spirit can use this book of the Bible to illustrate the spiritual love between Jesus and His Bride, the church.

What was your first spiritual crisis? Mine was wondering if I had been born Jewish and adopted by the Christians who raised me. The issue was resolved when I was reminded of being baptized.

Earlier in this work, the Bride faced hers, which was sin. That is portrayed as an unkempt vineyard. The Beloved helped her through the crisis. In the verse just before this section, He admonished all to let her rest. I do not know how much time passed between verses seven and eight. The amount is different in everybody's life. Prior to this point, the Bride has only known Jesus as a counseling shepherd. She had not seen him as one who leaps on mountains. "Mountains" are symbolic of human and

demonic obstacles. Jesus taught us to speak to such and command them to move "whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart...he will have whatever he says." (Mark 11:23) The obstacles in the world are as nothing before him. "Hills" speak of personal difficulties in our lives. They are much smaller than the largest obstacles or mountains.

As the section continues, the Bride has another new revelation of Jesus. She sees Him as a gazelle or a young stag. A gazelle is an animal that is fast and suddenly energetic. They easily run in high places and make ascending a mountain look effortless. It is no challenge for Jesus to leap over all mountains. At the same time, the stag image suggests fearlessly conquering all opposition. Here Jesus is standing, pictured as ready for action. The Lord is usually pictured sitting in Scripture. When the Lord is pictured as standing, very powerful things are about to happen. The Lord stood to receive the first martyr when Stephen died in Acts 7: 55 – 56. The Bride sees Jesus standing behind a wall. Who is it that is actually confined? What walls of self-protection have you erected around yourself? My own wall shut out the world and the needs of others for a long time. Jesus looked at me through that wall and brought me out. That is what is happening here. God placed a wall around each of us. This is his personal plan to train us for partnership. He knows the best way to reach the deepest part of the Bride's heart. We, as the church are the Bride. The windows in His plan (the wall) are for transforming our hearts. He woos us in love. After all that Christ has done for us, how can we do less than give him our best?

Ray Waleski

**REVELATION 21: 1 – 7****Day 31**

We are offered the water of life from the Alpha and the Omega, the one who is the Beginning and the End. The water of life . . . think about that for a minute . . . about how important water is to life. How often do we cry out in frustration, pain, and even anger when someone close to us passes away? We ask ourselves, “Why did this have to happen; we’re human and we’re meant to love so, why did my loved one have to die; how is this love and why does it hurt so much?

In our limited human minds, we tend to make someone’s passing all about “us” — how WE’RE going to feel lost, lonely, robbed, and angry. . . . As if the world should revolve around us. We tend to think on a subjective basis rather than objectively focusing on the joy that our loved ones are experiencing in Paradise. Scripture tells us that God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there will be no more death or mourning; no more crying or pain. They will drink from the spring of the water of life and made new. I picture ones that I lost now drinking from a Fountain of Youth, one that will give them renewal, rejuvenation, and refreshment. They have no more pain. They are free. They are happy and at peace. Yet here we are, wishing that they could be physically here with us.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, forgive our frail, flawed, minds for trying to cling to the old order of things when the new order promises each of us so much more than we can imagine. May we all look forward to the new order, where our tears will be dried and we’ll be made pain-free and new, in Paradise with you, forever. Amen*

Cubby Conrad

**Letting Jesus Bear Your Burdens**

"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

Jesus' compassion is shown repeatedly throughout the gospels. Here he shows loving concern by inviting us to come to Him for relief. Is there any greater feeling than being set free from whatever is weighing you down?

Jesus invites us to take His yoke and learn from Him. Does that mean to take on an additional burden? No! Look at the historical context. A yoke was a bar that fit over the neck and shoulders of two animals. When a heavy load had to be transported, two oxen were yoked together, thereby distributing the weight evenly between them. Jesus is describing a process of coming to Him for salvation and learning to know Him. Jesus is asking us to place ourselves under the yoke of His lordship. He promises a life of submission will fit us well and provide relief. Jesus offers to be with us in every trial we face. Sometimes He lifts the difficulties that weigh us down. While at other times, He lifts the heavy feelings that accompany our trials. There are times when He walks with us through the hardships and suffering. He gives us the grace and strength to endure. Through it all, we will discover His yoke is easy and His burden is light because His compassion and mighty power carry us through.

Michael Crawford

**PSALM 139: 1 – 8**

**Day 33**

*1 You have searched me, Lord, and you know me.*

*2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.*

*3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.*

*4 Before a word is on my tongue, you, Lord, know it completely.*

*5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.*

*6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.*

*7 Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?*

*8 If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

“God sees you.” I cannot tell you how many times our mother said those words when we were growing up. It was usually a warning to shape-up before she got the broom after us. She didn’t hit us, but it scared us into complying. Those words have stuck with me throughout life and have often come to mind in situations where I could have made better choices. I admit that in some situations, even now, the broom would be more effective. But Psalm 139 means so much more. I love Psalm 139. It is comfort when I am sad, when I am worried, when I am frightened and in so many other situations. I know that God is always near. God knows me and what is going on in my life. He knows everything about me. What’s more, he doesn’t know just me, but every human-being that ever lived, who is living now or will live in the future. It is so comforting to think that God is always there.

Sally McClintock

**Jesus Calms the Storm**

*As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's cross to the other side of the lake." He was already in the boat, so they started out, leaving the crowds behind (although other boats followed). But soon a fierce storm arose. High waves began to break into the boat until it was nearly full of water. Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. Frantically they woke him up, shouting, "Teacher, don't you even care that we are going to drown?" When he woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the water, "Quiet down!" Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. And he asked them, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still not have faith in me?" And they were filled with awe and said among themselves, "Who is this man, that even the wind and waves obey him?"*

Can't we see ourselves in the very same doubt and panic as the disciples? We are battered by the storms of life. Sometimes we are in such deep despair that we actually do wonder, does Jesus know or care about me? The answer is absolutely "Yes!" He does know what is happening in your life and he cares deeply about you. But we are frightened, panic sets in and we can't see a way out. At times like these, we have two options. We can worry and fret about our situation. Or, we can resist our fears and put our trust in him. Talk to Jesus, confess to him that you are in doubt and need his help to get you through this. The solution may not come immediately and it may not come easily, but Jesus will see you through it. We underestimate his power to handle the crises in our lives.

**Prayer:** *Jesus, forgive me for not always fully trusting in you and your power to love and take care of me. Please help me to overcome my fears and show me how to move forward in trust. Amen*

Linda Huggens

**JOHN 19: 25 – 27****Day 35**

*"But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, 'Woman, behold, your son!' Then he said to the disciple, 'Behold, your mother!' And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home." John 19:25b-27*

"Blood is thicker than water." The old adage proves true when family members gather round in times of crisis to help the family member in need. God has put us all in families so that family members can reach out to care for and love one another. God loves us through love of family. But there are families who do not reach out to care for one another. Parents abandon an unwanted child. Children run away from home. God grieves when hearts that should be full of love are empty. God never abandons His children.

Hanging from the cross, Jesus' heart was full of love for his mother Mary. He arranged for her care by entrusting her to "the disciple whom he loved." "Woman, here is your son," "Here is your mother," he said to the disciple. By his act of love Jesus showed us what his death was for.

His death would prove to be a magnet, drawing people to the love of God, fashioning them into the family of God. Christ puts in our hearts the love that beats in his heart so that as members of God's family we might reach out to one another in need. "Here is your son, your daughter." "Here is your mother, your father." We speak those words to one another. Family we are. Through us Christ reaches out to help and care.

Pastor Sager

**On the road to Emmaus**

*Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him. He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk?" They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?" "What things?" he asked. . . . He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself.*

Reading this scripture, I think so often in a week or even daily, we can hear something through the media, work-place, school, friends/family, but do we know all the facts? How quickly do you start to share that gossip? Like the game Telephone we played as children, pass the secret, till you get to the end of the row, was the same sentence shared or did it turn out twisted, silly, and not the original statement.

Jesus shared in the scripture, how "foolish" the people were to believe everything they heard. He shared what events happened and their "eyes" were open. They recognized who they were with. That time they spent walking with Jesus, they could have recognized him sooner, if they weren't wrapped up with the discussion from earlier events. Attending church and reading scripture helps to keep me focused. See what is in front of us now, before it disappears.

Sarah Zumburum

**Jesus Washes His Disciples Feet**

<sup>3</sup> Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; <sup>4</sup> so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel around his waist. <sup>5</sup> After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. . . .

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them. <sup>13</sup> "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.

Jesus knew that on the next day after the feast he would be betrayed by Judas Iscariot. If we put ourselves in Jesus' place how incredibly difficult would it be to dine with the disciples knowing what he would face the next day and that one of those at the last supper would ultimately betray him. If that wasn't difficult enough Jesus took the role of a servant and washed the disciples' feet. By washing the disciples feet Jesus was spiritually washing away their sins and cleansing their souls. Jesus said to the disciples "What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter" because they did not know that Jesus would be betrayed. This symbolic action of washing their feet was to show his unconditional love to them in the face of his impending death. This unselfish act of love and submission was a wonderful example of what Jesus wanted his disciples to continue to do without him. Can we all learn by Jesus' actions to love one another and spread forgiveness on a daily basis?

Wendy Noel

**The Death of Jesus**

<sup>33</sup> *At noon, darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon.* <sup>34</sup> *And at three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” . . .* <sup>38</sup> *The curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.*

<sup>39</sup> *And when the centurion, who stood there in front of Jesus, saw how he died, he said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!”*

During the time of Jesus’ ministry, the Jews did everything they could think of to extinguish the Son of Righteousness and ultimately, resorted to ending his life by crucifixion on the Cross. During this time there was a dark cloud over the land from Noon to three in the afternoon. This is the darkest time in Jesus’ human life. The disciples had forsaken him and he is suffering a horrible death at the hands of the people he came to save. He did not cry out “Why have you forsaken me” to His disciples, but to God, his Father. In this moment he, alone, suffers the punishment for all our sin. At the time of Jesus’ death the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. This spoke terror to the Jews and all nonbelievers as a sign of destruction of their church and nation. At the same time, it spoke comfort to all believing Christians as a sign of hope and eternal life in the blood of Christ. The Centurion seems to be deeply moved by the confidence with which Christ had openly addressed God as his Father, and committed his soul into his hands. He longs to know the Savior who was wounded and pierced to save him from the wrath to come and we should as well. Love So Amazing!

Sally McClintock

**Describing Jesus' Burial**

*Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. . . . So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb.*

Joseph of Arimathea sounds like the type of person we would all like to have in our corner. Moved by his compassion and love for Jesus, Joseph boldly stepped up to Pilate, asking for Jesus' body.

The text goes on to explain how Joseph cared for Jesus' body: the buying of the linen cloth, the transferring of the body, the dressing of the corpse in linen, and the placement of Jesus' body in a tomb cut out of rock. Clearly, Joseph went to great measures to assure the proper burial for someone so beloved. He wasn't paralyzed by his grief; in fact, he saw what needed to be done for his friend, his mentor, and he acted on it. Jesus inspires us to see what needs to be done, to take that next step and go the next mile, to accomplish that which needs to be done. He gives us the impetus to do what's right even when it's not easy.

**Prayer:** *Heavenly Father, help us to move forward even when our task is difficult, even when we feel as though we have nothing left in our tank. Help us to see what needs to be done, and please give us the courage, the resources, the energy, and the love to do what we need to do not only for ourselves, but for others for whom we are called to help. We ask this in your precious name. Amen*

**PSALM 148****Day 40**

By raising Jesus from the dead God was acting to save us. Firmly in place is the breastplate that defends us from the assaults of evil. Just as God raised Jesus from the dead, so God triumphs over every evil in our life and turns it into good. Even death becomes part of God's way of saving us; because of Christ's resurrection, death is for us the door to eternal life. In the spirit of this third verse of an Easter hymn of the church we invite all creation to join us in giving praise to God for his great work of salvation in the resurrection of Jesus our Lord:

*"Now let the heavens be joyful, let earth its song begin, the whole world keep high triumph, and all that is therein; Let all things seen and unseen their notes of gladness blend, for Christ again has risen, our joy that has no end."*

"Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars. Praise him, you highest heavens and you waters above the skies. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created. He set them in place for ever and ever; he gave a decree that will never pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and maidens, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens." Ps. 148:3–13

*May all creation praise God for the Glorious Resurrection!*

Pastor Scott



## **HOLY WEEK & EASTER WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

**ASH WEDNESDAY, 7:30 PM**

**MAUNDY THURSDAY, 7:30 PM**

**GOOD FRIDAY, 7:30 PM**

**EASTER DAWN, 6:45 AM**

**EASTER, 8:45 AM & 11:15 AM**

