



HOLY WEEK



Daily Devotions

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**THE SUMMIT
CHURCH**

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Introduction

A lot can happen between one Sunday and the next. Lives can end while others begin. Hopes can be shattered or dreams fulfilled. But never has one week shaken the earth like this one. People have lived and died for what happened in a handful of days, over two millennia ago. Within that span of time lies the hinge point of humanity.

The gospels move through Jesus's life and ministry at breakneck speed, but they shift into slow motion for his final week. While only Matthew and Luke tell the story of his birth, all four books devote multiple chapters to his last days. The change in pace emphasizes the urgency of the moment, like a camera sharpening the focus on every scene as a cross on a hill looms in the background.

It is a week full of paradoxes. Triumphant entries and thorny crowns, gentle words and verbal punches, foot-washings and brutal beatings, and the darkest of all Fridays deemed good. The week closes with the most devastating death, followed by the greatest plot twist of all time. It is excruciatingly painful and piercingly beautiful all at once and try as we might, we cannot look away from it.

But we are not passive spectators. The week's storyline begs the question, "*Who do we say Jesus is?*" We find there are only two possible answers. Either Jesus of Nazareth is God's son or a liar. Either the cross and the empty tomb mean everything or they mean nothing. Either he is the King of Kings or a crook—there is no in-between. Jesus came into Jerusalem riding on a donkey with an ultimatum in hand. Every parable and upturned table, every drop of perfume and lash of a whip, every shout of "Hosanna!" and "Crucify him!" tell those watching, "either you'll have to kill him or you'll have to crown him."¹

Holy Week is a week of reckoning.

¹ Tim Keller, *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* (New York: Riverhead, 2011), 177.

Since the fourth century, the Christian church has celebrated Holy Week.² Each day is traditionally accompanied by a story from the final days of Jesus's life. Some bring intrigue, like Spy Wednesday, recalling Judas's betrayal. Others come with ancient words, like Maundy Thursday, in which we remember Jesus washing the disciples' feet and instituting the Lord's Supper. When we observe Holy Week, we join a chorus of Christian brothers and sisters that extends back through the ages. We step into a two-thousand-year-old story that will never grow dull.

Holy Week changes everything. Come with us as we walk through it together. Join the generations before us as we follow Christ's footsteps from the Jerusalem gates, to a rugged cross, all the way to an empty tomb. Gaze upon the nail-scarred hands and feet that carried you back home.

*See the price of our redemption
See the father's plan unfold
Bringing many sons to glory
Grace unmeasured, love untold.³*

² "Holy Week," *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessed February 6, 2026, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holy-Week>.

³ Matt Boswell, Matt Papa, and Michael Bleecker, "Come Behold the Wondrous Mystery," 2013, song.

PALM
SUNDAY

Hosanna

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humbled and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” - Zechariah 9:9

It was an odd departure from the standard royal procession. Instead of a chariot, a young donkey. Instead of velvet and silk, traveling cloaks lined the path. And instead of a mighty army, a ragtag group of fishermen, tax collectors, and women. While it seemed almost comical compared to the usual Roman pomp and circumstance, the Pharisees shuddered with fear and rage. They knew that under Caesar’s reign, even a poor man’s parade was enough to put a target on their back.

This entry was a deliberate departure for Jesus, who had spent years keeping his miracles quiet, charging those who knew his true identity to “tell no one” (Mark 8:30). Like a conductor, he kept the orchestra at bay, hushing them until just the right time. But with each town they passed, the crowd grew and momentum built. Some saw Lazarus emerge from the tomb, others knew only darkness until Jesus gave them sight. The disciples had years of stories—bread multiplied, storms calmed, sick healed. With all they had seen, they could only keep quiet for so long. When they reached Jerusalem, it was as if Jesus raised his baton, summoned the full force of the musicians, and said “*Now.*” The worship held back for so long burst forth in a celebration mixed with desperation. As they waved branches, they shouted, “Hosanna!”—a word that meant “Save us!”

But Jesus knew the fickleness of the human heart. After all, it was why he had come. He knew that this worship would dry out quicker than a palm branch left on the side of the road, and the cries of “Hosanna” would soon be drowned

out with screams to crucify him. The only way to answer Sunday's plea for salvation was to give himself over to Friday's bloodthirsty demands.

Like a king on a wobbly colt, a strange mixture of vulnerability and sovereignty would mark Jesus in the days ahead. This man, who was fully God, saw further down the Jerusalem road than the angry Pharisees or adoring crowd. He knew the path led to Calvary, and beyond it to an empty tomb. And with the eyes and ears of eternity, he could hear the echoes of Zechariah's prophecy as he looked toward the horizon of a Revelation promise.

One day, the King will come again to a crowd with palm branches in hand. But this time, his welcome party will not wear traveling coats covered in the dust of the earth. Instead, a chorus of every nation will be dressed in robes washed white by his very own blood.

“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” -Revelation 7:9-10

HOLY
MONDAY

A Temple Cleansed

Read: Matthew 21:12-17 and Isaiah 56:1-8

This wasn't the Jesus they were used to. The same man who had entered town on a humble donkey now wielded a whip. As they watched him throw over tables and haul men out to the street, he seemed far more like a lion than a lamb. Onlookers were flabbergasted. Who did he think he was, storming into the temple like he owned the place?

The outer portion of the temple was known as the Court of Gentiles, designated for those outside the family of Israel. It was built on the promise that God would draw people of all nations to Himself. If a Gentile had questions about the Jewish faith, this was the place to find answers. But on the week of Passover, they found nothing in the temple court that inspired awe. No scent of incense and echoes of worship, just squawking birds and money changers calling out competing exchange rates. It felt like a common city marketplace, not the house of Yahweh. Just a crowd of people looking for the best bargain, rejoicing at the sound of coins in their pockets, rushing to check one more thing off their list. And so the Master of the House came in and began to set things right.

While the violent purging of the temple demands our attention, the next moment is just as crucial. The story isn't simply about what Jesus drove out, but who he welcomed in—a quieter act, but one that speaks just as loudly as whips and upturned tables. After the money changers were unceremoniously ushered out, Jesus opened the doors to those of no economic value: the blind, the lame, and children. They had no goods to sell, just a hunger for healing and childlike faith. The blind and lame hung on his every word. The children continued the cheers of "Hosanna," recognizing the man from the palm branch parade. In their innocent eyes, he hadn't changed one bit. Finally, the court began to match the blueprints laid out in Isaiah.

⁴"Judgment in the Temple," Ligonier Ministries, accessed January 12, 2026, <https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/judgment-temple>.

Jesus's scene in the temple seemed out of character—a momentary outburst, a temporary lapse in an otherwise calm demeanor. But if we look closer throughout scripture, we find this has always been God's way. He is known for purging greedy instincts and calling out religious rituals devoid of true faith. He has always insisted that our regard for the outsider and our regard for him are inextricably linked. The work of the Sermon on the Mount and the work of cleansing the temple are the same; the latter is just more physically abrasive than the former. Both were meant to be a scouring pad for the heart, and that purifying task continues in us today.

We are comfortable with the Jesus who tells us stories. We're fine with the one who multiplies our fishes and loaves and turns water into wine. We like a Jesus we can contain. But what happens when he enters the temple of our hearts and begins to “rearrange the furniture?”⁵ What if he upends everything, drags away whatever does not bring him glory, and creates more space to consider the hurting and hungry around us? Will we allow him to do his sanctifying work in our temple or, like the Pharisees, will we try to subdue him?

After all, if we call him Lord, he really does own the place.

⁵ Tim Keller, “The Cross and the Temple” (Sermon, Redeemer Presbyterian Church, New York, NY, March 27, 1994), <https://podcast.gospelinlife.com/e/the-cross-and-the-temple/>.

HOLY
TUESDAY

The Final Debate

Read: Matthew 21:23-22:46

The dust settled from the temple cleansing. After noisy parades and crashing tables, things finally quieted down. But inside a fight was brewing—this time with words instead of whips.

Jesus came as he always did, with stories to tell. His metaphors were not thickly veiled or left to individual interpretation. Instead, he wielded his parables like a sword, aiming for the heart of the Pharisees and Sadducees. Men accustomed to being heroes, the very picture of morality, were now cast as villains. His stories cut through bone and marrow, separating true faith from pious performance. He did not mince words, but spoke like a man who knew his days were numbered.

The Pharisees circled the wagons. They brandished controversies like shields, with hot button issues ranging from tax policy to the afterlife. It was a two-fold goal-trap Jesus and turn the attention away from their own hypocrisy. They measured their questions and rebuttals against the temperature of the crowd. But Jesus was not easily stumped. He took the entire Torah, every law they had studied since they were boys, and summed it up in two short sentences. Instead of polling the audience, he simply said what was true. It's hard to win a verbal sparring match when you're up against The Word himself.

When it comes to facing our own sin, we prefer hot takes and hypotheticals to open heart surgery. True conviction is awfully personal, so we hide behind lofty debates instead of allowing scripture to pierce our own souls. We distract ourselves with endless disputes—anything to avoid eye contact with the Teacher who is talking about *us*. By drowning out Jesus's stories with our own commentary, we become the very characters we don't want to be. We act like

the child offering lip service to the father, the brutal tenants in the vineyard, the royal subjects who miss the feast.

The Pharisees lost the debate with Jesus. They were quickly running out of tricks in their playbook and needed a different approach. An idea began to form: If they could tie themselves to the mighty arm of Rome, perhaps they could silence this storyteller once and for all. The vineyard thieves huddled up and devised a new plan of attack.

Little did they know, there was a man close to the Master's son ready and willing to help them.

SPY
WEDNESDAY
Alabaster Bottles and Silver Coins

Read: John 12:1-8 and Luke 22:1-6

Mary of Bethany tightened her grip around the alabaster bottle and surveyed the room. Her sister Martha attended to everyone's needs, replenishing drinks, and clearing the table. Her brother Lazarus—she still couldn't believe it—sat and laughed with Jesus. This man who she watched breathe his dying breath, whose very body she had wrapped in burial clothes, now sat feasting with the same friends who had visited his grave. It was too much for words. What could she offer to Jesus to show her outpouring of gratitude?

There was only one thing.

When Mary broke open her bottle of perfume, heads turned and eyebrows raised. A rich, heady scent rushed through the house, followed by a wave of whispers and scornful looks. As she poured out every last drop on Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair, a collective gasp stole all the air from the room. The dinner guests didn't understand, but Jesus did. He knew that in just a few short days, he would be adorned with a crown of thorns instead of perfume. But thanks to this woman, the aroma of royalty may have lingered on him as the soldiers threw a scarlet robe around his bloodied shoulders.⁶ He silenced the crowd, looked down at the woman he knew so well, and promised to keep her story like his own treasured possession.

Even as the insults flew in her direction, Mary lingered at Jesus's feet—a place she knew well. Nothing could harm her while she was under his watchful gaze. She had sat there as a student while her sister scurried around doing chores. She had fallen at those feet and wept when Lazarus died, wondering why her miracle-working friend had not come back in time to save him. Questions were welcome at the feet of Jesus. Mary knew in that position, the world got quiet and scoffers were silenced, even if the rebuke came from the mouth of one of Jesus's own disciples.

⁶ Russ Ramsey, *The Passion of the King of Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018), page 195.

Judas was a numbers man. He could calculate the cost of Mary's alabaster bottle in seconds. He shielded his indignation in charity, berating her for such extravagance, for not putting her money toward a better use. It's the easiest reaction to witnessing true worship—criticizing it before it has the chance to convict us. Judas was the group treasurer, in charge of the disciples' collective purse. He knew what they could afford for food and lodging and exactly how much he could slip into his own pockets without anyone noticing. Perhaps it was a rainy-day fund, just in case the itinerant ministry life didn't work out or Jesus wasn't who he said he was. But each time his fingers grasped one of those coins, a drop of poison went into his heart. It wasn't long before the drops added up to a lethal dose.

Judas sat in Jesus's general vicinity. Mary sat at his feet. Judas knew how to be around the things of Jesus. Mary knew how to be in his presence. Judas weighed relationships through a cost-benefit analysis. Mary lived in the upside-down economy of Christ, where losses are truly gains. Two calculations were made that day in Bethany; two stories kept. Two names remembered down through the ages for two defining choices.

Judas went out to strike a bargain.

Mary chose the better thing.

MAUNDY
THURSDAY

Take This Cup

Read: John 13:1-35 and Mark 14:22-42

Passover was a sacred night. The story of the Israelites' harrowing escape out of Egypt had been passed down for generations. Firstborn sons were spared under the covering of a spotless lamb's blood. The angel of death passed over Hebrew houses as wails swept through Egypt like a tidal wave. Centuries of slavery came to an end. It was a night to keep watch because all those years ago, the Lord kept watch over them. After days of crowds and commotion, Jesus gathered with his closest friends in an upper room for a night of remembrances, both old and new.

There was a centuries-old rhythm to the Passover dinner, but once again Jesus rewrote the script. He began with an unusual act—washing the feet of his disciples. They were taken aback as he stooped to the position of the lowliest servant, washed the grime of the earth off their feet, and gently dried them with a towel. Then he took the traditional bread and wine and instituted a new ritual, one that commemorated a rescue not yet complete.

As he tore the bread and passed it to his friends, he told them it symbolized his body, which would soon break on their behalf. He passed around a cup of wine, saying it represented his blood that would pour out for their sake. With this cup came a new covenant, one that did not take the form of stone tablets and animal sacrifices. From that moment forward, the law would be etched on their hearts. And rather than blood sprinkled on a congregation or painted on doorposts, it would be consumed like a cup of wine, running down to the deepest parts of their souls.

In centuries to come, the church would remember this night as Maundy Thursday, derived from the Latin word “mandatum,” or mandate.⁷ With new traditions came a new command: Jesus's disciples were to be marked by love. Not a mere affection for one another, but a life-laying-down kind of love. It was the love

⁷ “What Is Maundy Thursday?” Ligonier Ministries. Accessed January 29, 2026. <https://learn.ligonier.org/articles/what-is-maundy-thursday>

he exemplified in the upper room—washing the feet of those who would flee from him, offering bread to one who would betray him and wine to another who would deny him. Although his friends could not fulfill their end of the bargain, he loved them so dearly that he bent down to serve them just the same.

After dinner, as their time grew short, Jesus narrowed the circle down to Peter, James, and John. They walked to the spot where he often prayed—a garden of all places. But where living things sprung to life, all he could smell was the stench of death. The weight of tomorrow weighed on him like a boulder and he was overcome with the grief and horror of it all. On this night of keeping watch, his closest friends could not keep their eyes open, so Jesus was left to pray on his own.

When Isaiah and Jeremiah spoke of God's punishment, they called it the cup of wrath. It was a drink that induced staggering, but had to be consumed down to the last drop. This was the only way for a just and holy God to deal with the evil of the world. When Jesus offered the cup to his disciples, he knew an exchange was required—new wine for fatal poison. A cup of covenant for a cup of wrath. In the final hours of the Passover, alone with this Father in a garden, the Son of God allowed himself to feel the most agonizing of human emotions: the dread of death. He cried out, sweating drops of blood at the thought of the suffering and silence that awaited him. His friends slept as he begged his Father for another way to bring His children home.

The tramping of boots grew closer and a line of torches lit up the night sky, winding like a snake toward the garden. The Father's answer had come.

The firstborn son would not be spared.

The cup of wrath would not pass.

Jesus stood and braced himself to drink it down to the dregs.

GOOD
FRIDAY

Man of Sorrows

Read: Isaiah 53 and John 18:12-19:37

It had been the longest night. From the venomous kiss to the flight and denial of his disciples through the sham of a trial before the Sanhedrin, Jesus faced his accusers with a quiet confidence. These men were obsessed with ritual cleanliness and loved lofty prayers in the light of day. But they acted like thugs under the cover of night—spitting on Jesus and slapping him across the face. The Pharisees remembered their high priest's advice. If they were to maintain the status quo, this new movement must be stopped and its leader silenced. In their plotting, Caiaphas had told them it would be easier if one man died for the people.

If only he had known just how true those words were.

Pilate kept his subjects under control with a blend of appeasement and intimidation. Men had come to him before pleading for their lives, but Jesus, bruised and bloodied as he was, did not beg. There was a steadiness to him that unnerved the politician, an honesty about him that he found terrifying. What was truth after all to Rome's middleman, but something to be twisted to his convenience? Jesus did not seem like a man easily bent. As the two men faced each other in the palace, both believed they held the other's destiny in their hands, yet only one could be right.

The crowd cried out for an execution. Pilate suggested a prisoner swap, choosing a notorious murderer in the hopes they would rethink their demands. But, despising and rejecting Jesus, they called for Barabbas to be spared instead. Pilate gave in, washing his hands of the affair. The mob had won. Jesus was sent away to be killed in a criminal's stead.

The Roman government reserved crucifixion for its worst offenders. They hoped the torture and humiliation would ensure submission throughout the empire. It was a vicious act, stripping a man of his clothes, nailing his hands and feet to

wooden posts, and hanging him out in the open to die slowly, either from “shock or asphyxiation.”⁸ But the Roman soldiers grew numb to their bloody business. They devised games to pass the time, like rolling dice for prisoners’ clothes. Anything to entertain themselves under the awning of gore and death.

By the time he arrived at Calvary, Jesus’s face was bruised and swollen from multiple beatings. It was enough to make a decent person look away. The soldiers removed his tunic, revealing a back torn to shreds by a whip. With each pound of the hammer, nails drove through skin, muscle, and bone. As he was raised upright on a skull-shaped hill, every breath came at great cost, requiring him to lift his stricken and weary body for each gasp of air. But behind the physical agony laid unfathomable restraint.

The rabble watching the scene sneered, saying if he was truly the Christ, he could call the whole thing off. They were right—he could have stopped it, which made every second of his suffering all the more excruciating. Jesus had angel armies at his disposal. He oversaw creation with the Trinity. The Father had knit together every bone and muscle in the bodies of the soldiers who tortured his only Son. With one command, Jesus could have summoned the entire cosmos to stop the abomination, but he spoke not a word. Why would someone who could come down from a cross choose to stay?

His final moments told the story of who he was. He prayed for those who persecuted him. He cared for his mother, who felt a sword pierce her own heart as she watched the son she once cradled in her arms cry out in pain. Then, turning to the thief on the cross beside him, Jesus promised that in just a little while they would be together in paradise. What was the point of this—using his waning breath to comfort a convicted criminal?

Although it was only midday, darkness covered Jerusalem. A shadow came over Jesus as well, as a heavy curtain fell between him and the Father. It was worse than anything he

⁸ Tim Keller, *Jesus the King: Understanding the Life and Death of the Son of God* (New York: Riverhead, 2011), 217.

had felt all day. He cried out, in the words of David's lament, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" A soldier held vinegary wine to his lips, wondering what might happen next. Letting out a loud cry, a wail encompassing all his physical and spiritual anguish, Jesus said, "It is finished," and handed himself over to death. The ground around the soldiers' feet trembled. They watched in shock as nearby rocks split in two. Rumors circulated that the temple curtain, thick as a wall, had been ripped in half, top to bottom. The soldiers had seen many things at crucifixions, but nothing like this. Who was this man, whose very death shook the earth and blackened the sky? What did he possess that the others didn't?

Love. Love was the answer to all of Friday's questions.

Hung on a tree, in the shadow of a garden, Jesus died for the sin that sprouted in Eden. He stood between us and the sword, accepting its piercing blow on our behalf. He let a veil fall between him and heaven, so that the veil between us and the Father could be torn away for good. He was crushed in the vice of death for our iniquities, cut off from the land of the living so that he could bring us home. The Son of God became the Man of Sorrows so that by his wounds we would be healed.

That afternoon on Calvary's hill, one man did die for the people, but not for the reasons Caiaphas had imagined.

It was because Jesus *loved us*.

And that love made the darkest of Fridays good.

Reflections + Observations

SILENT
SATURDAY

God Rested

Read: John 19:38-42 and Hebrews 3:7-4:16.

He was buried much like he was born—wrapped in strips of cloth and laid in a borrowed bed. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had the unenviable task of taking Jesus off the cross and carrying him to his grave. Nicodemus gently wiped away the dirt and blood from his lifeless body and wrapped it with myrrh and spices. Although he was a Pharisee, Nicodemus saw Jesus for who he truly was. He would never forget that one evening when he asked him how a man could be born again. Is this what Jesus meant when he said that the Son of Man would be lifted up—on the beams of a Roman cross? Did God really love the world so much that He would send His only son to die in such a horrific way? The two men finished their work and left the tomb as the Sabbath began.

And God rested.

The Sabbath stretched from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. It was a sacred day for the Jewish people, reminding them of the seventh day of creation. In the first six days, God spoke all things into being, formed man from dust, and saw that it was good. Then, although he never grew tired, he set aside the seventh day for rest. The Hebrew calendar was marked by Sabbaths and sevens. The Day of Atonement, set apart for purification from their sins, came during the seventh month of every year. Every seventh year was a Sabbath year, in which they let the ground rest from their sowing and reaping. After seven sets of seven years, they celebrated a Year of Jubilee, when debts were forgiven and bondservants set free. Just as God orchestrated the week of Passover to offer His son as our sacrifice, He intentionally laid him down to rest at the start of the Sabbath.

To rest is to cease from striving. It is a silent rebellion against bodies and minds set in perpetual motion. Rest requires dependence—trusting that as we lie down, the Lord of the Sabbath will provide and keep watch over us. But Old

Testament priests had little time to sit and relax. They faced a continual stream of sacrifices and blood because sin never took a day off. Works-based righteousness is a full-time job. It requires constant atonement and endless toil, and its business ledger makes debtors of us all.

Jesus came as our Great High Priest, but rather than offering a goat or a lamb, he climbed onto the altar himself. He bore the yoke of the cross so we could lay our burdens of sin and shame down. God looked at His son's finished work and said that it was good. Those nail-scarred hands hold the only key to true Sabbath rest.

*“Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
life and rest and joy and peace.”⁹*

⁹ Louisa M.R. Stead, “Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus,” 1882, hymn.

EASTER
SUNDAY

All Things New

Read: John 20:1-18 and Revelation 21:1-6

As night fell on Saturday and the Sabbath ended, Jesus's followers sat paralyzed by grief and shock. A few of the women excused themselves and got to work. They knew what had to happen next—someone had to anoint the body. They gathered the spices and oils and went to bed for another fitful night of sleep. The next morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene and the other women rose and made their way to the tomb.

And so, with echoes of Eden, a woman took a walk through a garden. Mary had lived a tormented life, until Jesus spoke a word that made the demons flee. As she made her way to the grave, she must have wondered what would become of her. Perhaps the snake's whispers would return and hold her captive again. The only man she knew who could raise the dead back to life lay lifeless himself in a cold tomb. There was nothing left for Mary to do but prepare her teacher for burial. Exhausted and heartbroken, she wondered if a small group of women had the strength to roll away a cumbersome gravestone.

Thankfully, someone else had already thought of that.

Even after the angels, the empty tomb, and discarded grave clothes, it was hard for Mary to see past Friday's crucifixion. After all she had witnessed, it was too painful to hope for an alternative ending to the story. As the torrent of emotions rushed out, a man drew near and asked her why she was crying. Through eyes clouded by tears, Mary assumed he was the gardener. She begged him to show her the body of her teacher so she could say one final goodbye. And then The Gardener said her name.

Jesus could have made his resurrected return any way he pleased. He could have paraded into town on a white horse. He could have stormed into the temple again, this time with a sword instead of a whip. He could have blazed into Pilate's

palace and demanded a crown. But instead, he chose to recreate the scene where everything had been broken and set it right again. His spilled blood acted as the antivenom to the snake's poison. His gentle words to a woman in the cool morning air of a garden silenced the enemy's lies.

Easter morning, like so much of our faith, is both cosmically triumphant and deeply personal. Where we see a quiet moment between a woman and her Teacher, a curtain lifted to another realm would have revealed a far more raucous scene. Jesus's resurrection changed everything, from the depths of human hearts to the greatest celestial heights. With one breath in a cold tomb, hell's taunting song was drowned out by the victory hymn of heaven. With one beat of a heart, death itself started working backward.¹⁰ And, with just a word, everything sad in Mary's own life came untrue.¹¹

Like the first spring blossom that bursts through winter's soil, Jesus's risen body was a signpost of what is to come—a guarantee of a future reality. There will be a triumphant return one day, this time with swords and crowns and a white horse. There will be another garden, and in the middle of it a life-giving tree that heals the nations. Jesus will come back and dwell with us again. He will call us by name, wipe away every tear we have cried, heal every pain we have suffered, make every demon flee, and restore everything that was broken. The old will pass away. The new will come. We know this because one morning, a woman went looking for a dead man and found her living, breathing Savior instead.

We are Easter people, called to plant seeds of a coming resurrection. Every drink we offer to the thirsty, every meal we give to the hungry, every balm we apply to the wounded tells a dying world, "It will not always be so."¹² We carry Easter morning light to dark places, guiding the way to a city that knows no night. The good news Jesus entrusted to Mary all those Sundays ago restores our souls today. As we live in the aftershock of the fall, we wait expectantly for the day when God

¹⁰ C.S. Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* (1950; repr., New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 163.

¹¹ J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Return of the King*, vol. 3 of *The Lord of the Rings* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1986), 246.

¹² Sally Lloyd-Jones, *The Jesus Storybook Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 36.

An Easter Blessing

May the Lord mark your heart
with the stubbornness of spring—
a season that tells us no matter how long the winter,
sprouts of new life will persistently
push through the barren earth.

As creation around you practices resurrection,
may you see the same work in your own life,
finding buds and blossoms in the corners of your soul
that had once been dark and cold.

May the word of the Lord fall like rain from heaven
into your heart and mind,
bearing good fruit for all to see.

When you grow tired from tilling the ground
and pulling up weeds,
remember that no Spirit-drenched work ever returns void.

On this Easter morning,
may you meet the eyes of The Gardener,
and hear him say your name.

Then go out in joy, be led forth in peace.
See the mountains break into singing,
and the trees of the field clap their hands.
Let all you do resound with Mary's refrain,

"I have seen the Lord."



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