

***“HUNGERING AND
THIRSTING FOR GOD:
FEASTING ON HIS WORD”***

***HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL GUIDE
2022***



FERNCREEK BAPTIST CHURCH

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In early days Lent was a time of preparation of candidates for baptism on Easter Sunday. During the season of Lent these candidates prepared for this initiation into the Christian life. Lent for us is not only a time of preparation; it is also a time of prayer, repentance, sacrifice, soul-searching, self-denial, and service. Sundays, which are days for commemorating the resurrection, are omitted in counting the forty days of reflection and repentance. The color purple is used during this time to symbolize repentance and solemnity.

The forty weekdays in the season of Lent symbolize the forty-day fasts of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus. The focus of Lent is for Christians to imitate Jesus' withdrawal into the wilderness for forty days. The sacred season of Lent concludes with Holy Week. Holy Week is a time of reflection upon the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Holy Week leads us to the joyous and glorious season of Easter.

These Holy Week devotionals, written by members and friends of our church family, are reflections of this year's theme, "Hungering and Thirsting for God: Feasting on His Word". There are two devotionals for each day – one for morning and one for evening. You will find it helpful to read the daily Bible readings included in this book which trace the events of Jesus' last week on earth.

We hope that you will find inspiration, encouragement, and renewal not only through the reading of these devotionals and daily Bible readings, but also by participating in our worship services of this week. We hope you will let this devotional guide be a part of your daily personal and/or family worship as you "feast" on His Word.

Thanks to those of you who have received this devotional book as a gift from our church family. Thanks to those who compiled, edited, and proofed this devotional book. Thanks to all of you devotional writers for allowing God to use you to challenge and inspire us. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift of Jesus...His Son...the Risen Christ!



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HOLY WEEK SERVICES

SUNDAY, APRIL 10: PALM SUNDAY

- 10:45 a.m.** We remember Jesus' entry into Jerusalem and into our lives. The children's processional will remind us of that day when the shouts of "Hosanna" rang through the streets. Join us for worship in our sanctuary or online by going to www.ferncreekbaptist.org and clicking the red Worship Livestream button.
- 7:00 p.m.** This Lenten Reflection will be led by the Adult Choir and individual musicians who will present musical offerings that remind us of the events of Holy Week. The service will also be livestreamed.

THURSDAY, APRIL 14: MAUNDY THURSDAY

- 6:00 p.m.** We will participate in the Lord's Supper as we remember Jesus' Last Supper with His disciples. With only the sound of organ music and the sight of artistic depictions, we will silently reflect and feast upon His Word as we remember the events of this night. Please enter and depart the church building and grounds in silence. Participation in this service is in-person only.

FRIDAY, APRIL 15: GOOD FRIDAY

- 7:00 p.m.** This moving worship experience will focus on Christ's final earthly hours. The Adult Choir, Narrators, and Instrumentalists will present "The Final Hours: A Suite for Holy Week", by Lee and Susan Dengler. Please depart silently in anticipation of Christ's glorious resurrection. This service will also be livestreamed.

SUNDAY, APRIL 17: EASTER CELEBRATION

- 9:00 a.m.** We celebrate the glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ! God's Word will be spoken through proclamation and music from our church staff. This service is designed for those who desire to be widely spaced. What a perfect time to re-enter His sanctuary if you have been missing!
- 10:45 a.m.** We continue the celebration of Christ's resurrection as God's Word is proclaimed through proclamation and music by the Adult Choir. Come and fill His house as we celebrate Jesus' resurrection! Bring a friend who needs a word from God. This service will also be livestreamed.



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These Bible readings correspond with the events during the last week of Jesus' life on earth.

Sunday, April 10	Matthew 21:1-11 Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19
Monday, April 11	Matthew 21:12-20 Mark 11:12-19 Luke 19:45-46
Tuesday, April 12	Matthew 21:21 - 23:39 Mark 11:27 - 12:44 Luke 20:1 - 21:4 John 12:20-50
Wednesday, April 13	Matthew 24:1 - 26:16 Mark 13:1 - 14:11 Luke 21:5 - 22:6
Thursday, April 14	Matthew 26:17-56 Mark 14:12-52 Luke 22:7-53 John 13:1 - 18:13
Friday, April 15	Matthew 26:57 - 27:61 Mark 14:53 - 15:47 Luke 22:54 - 23:55 John 18:14 - 19:42
Saturday, April 16	Matthew 27:62-65 Luke 23:56
Sunday, April 17	Matthew 28:1-15 Mark 16:1-13 Luke 24:1-49 John 20:1-25



Palm Sunday Morning, April 10, 2022

FEASTING ON HIS WORD

It's the middle of the day, and you feel that hunger pain. You try drinking a big glass of water to curb your appetite. Sometimes that is not enough. You may need a "big ole" hamburger. Satisfaction comes with that full feeling.

That's how it is with God's Word. The day goes on and you don't feel satisfied with your work. That's when you need a big serving of God's love. We sometimes get busy and forget our daily helping of prayer and scripture. Then the hunger sets in.

When Jesus was heading to Jerusalem on a donkey, the crowds were waiting along the road. They lined the road with palm branches and shouted, "Praise God."

They knew He was the prophet. They heard of His miracles. They hungered to see Him and hear His message.

We need to read and apply the Word of God in our lives.

I personally do not read enough, but I am trying to improve and hope you will, too.

This Easter season, let's strive to feast on and fill our lives with His Word.

Glenda Coddington



JESUS' ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM AND MY LIFE

Matthew 21:1-11

Mark 11:1-11

Luke 19: 29-44

John 12:12-19

In John Chapter 12, Jesus has just resurrected Lazarus from the dead, after the man was dead for four days. In response, local religious leaders solidified their plans to have Jesus killed. The raising of Lazarus had generated a lot of attention. It had also increased visitors to view the once-dead man for themselves. Jesus' religious critics proved how callous and cruel they really were by not only plotting Jesus' death, but they were also willing to kill Lazarus, as well, because many of the Jews were going over to Jesus and putting their faith in Him.

Mark 11 and Luke 19 tell us that as Jesus approached Jerusalem, He sent two of His disciples saying, "Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here." They went and found the colt as Jesus had instructed them.

According to John 12, the next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" Robes and leafy branches were traditionally draped across the road to receive a king. The waving of palm branches, a symbolic act celebrating victory over one's enemy and/or reception of a king, may indicate that the people thought Jesus would take Israel's vacant throne and deliver the nation from Roman occupation and suppression.

Who were those that paid Him this respect: many people – a great crowd of those who came up to the feast; not all were inhabitants of Jerusalem, but country people that came from remote parts to worship at the feast nearer the temple of the Lord.

Just as Jesus entered Jerusalem, Jesus entered my life as a young child of eight years of age. The Bible lessons such as above were taught to me as a child both at church, Sunday School, and at home. I remember the wonderful teachers I had in each class. It was in these classes that I knew I needed to accept Jesus as my Savior. Jesus entered my heart as a young child and continues to live there today.

Mary Kleber



Monday Morning, April 11, 2022

MONDAY OF JESUS' LAST WEEK ON EARTH **Matthew 21:12-16**

It's only five verses, but it shows the world Jesus was living in, and it shows the world we are living in today.

First, Jesus was aghast at what was going on in His Father's house.

Next, He was healing the blind and crippled.

Lastly, He was being worshipped by the children's praises.

1. I was talking on the phone this morning with a friend who goes to another church in this city. She was almost at the point of tears recounting a disaster of a business meeting where adults were yelling across the room in disagreement. Not that I've ever been in that exact situation, but I have seen more than a few ruffled feathers in my life. Somehow that doesn't mesh with Jesus calling His Father's house a "house of prayer".

2. Healing the blind and crippled... I'm not aware of anyone in our congregation whom God has gifted to perform these miracles, but I do know of countless ones of you who:
 - take the sick to doctor's appointments
 - visit those hospitalized
 - pray for others to be healed
 - take food to those who are sick
 - send cards, texts, messages, and make calls to patients recovering
 - open your home to someone needing care

3. Children's praises. Nothing compares. I don't care if the child is just being introduced to God, or God is a real and vibrant part of his/her life. It doesn't matter if there are 100 children on the platform in a big church, or three children in a Ukrainian subway station, or one child in a rehearsal room. God hears, God is glorified, and eventually the whole world will know of His Kingdom that will know no end. (Side note, **nothing** compares with the words and/or melodies that children compose to tell of their Heavenly Father!)

It's when we as individuals hunger and thirst for God that He brings unity in our lives; He heals our broken bodies; and He inhabits the praise of His children.

Karen Love



TEMPLES OF PRAYER

Matthew 21:12-13

Jesus went to the Temple on Monday and “cleaned house”. It was the season of Passover, the Jewish holiday that called the people to remember the passing over of the death angel in Egypt. The Jews came together at the Temple in Jerusalem to thank God for their ancestors’ deliverance from slavery.

When Jesus entered the Temple court He saw that it had become similar to a shopping mall. The Outer Court of the Gentiles had been turned into a bazaar for selling sacrificial animals and taxing worshippers. Pens of sheep, goats, doves, and other sacrificial animals were in abundance. Moneychangers operated other tables. In one sense, all of these merchants provided a needed service. Faithful Jews were expected to offer animal sacrifices and financial gifts at the Temple. Pilgrims from far away found it more convenient to buy their animals in Jerusalem rather than transport them across the country. In order to pay their Temple taxes and to buy animals for their Passover sacrifices, the people had to have the correct currency. The Temple moneychangers were obviously making dishonest profits off of these innocent people during currency exchanges.

The priests and/or other local politicians maintained strict control over the franchises for these temple businesses, often demanding a kickback. Once a limited number of merchants had a corner on the market, they were free to do as they pleased. The moneychangers would charge exorbitant fees. Similarly, the animal sellers would mark up their prices. Just in case someone got the wise idea to set up a competing market elsewhere and undercut the temple sellers, the priests had that covered, too. Before an animal could be sacrificed it had to pass a temple inspection. The priests who were getting a kickback would simply reject any animal that did not come from their licensed merchants. The whole system was filled with greed and corruption. (We still experience those situations in today’s world.)

Jesus was furious about all of this exploitation of the pilgrims. He was angry at the desecration of God’s Holy Place. Jesus drove the animals, their keepers, and the moneychangers out of the Temple. He overturned the moneychangers’ tables and the merchants’ benches. Jesus rebuked them by saying, “Stop making My Father’s house a den of robbers! My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations”. The Temple was far from being a house of prayer. In the uproar of buying, selling, and bargaining, prayer was only a fleeting thought.

Is Fern Creek Baptist Church (or, the church of which you are a part) a house of prayer? Do we pray for others to know Jesus as personal Lord and Savior? Do we pray for those who are sick, hurting, and searching? Do we pray for our community, city, and our world? Do we pray for missionaries, government leaders, and community service leaders? Do we pray for our church to hunger and thirst after God? Do we pray for the Lord to send a great revival? Do we pray for each other and our church? What needs to be cleaned out of our “Temple” (church) in order to truly be a house of prayer?

Let us take even a closer look into the personal “Temples” in which we live. Is there anything which needs to be cleaned out of your life because it is taking away your time with and for God? What needs to be removed that is hindering your hunger and thirst for God? What has “set up tables” in your life? What needs to be cleaned out so you can hear God? Is your “Temple” a house of prayer?

Please join me in praying for God to heal our land – to heal our world. The words that our Lord spoke to Solomon in II Chronicles 7:14 say, “If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” God has called us to be a praying people! The most tragic of all things going on today is that many people are living without the hope of Jesus Christ. WE MUST PRAY! WE MUST REPENT! What prayer do you need to pray right now? Do you need to give your life to Him? Do you need to put your total trust in Him? Will you pray?

Linda Barnes Popham

Tuesday Morning, April 12, 2022

ANSWERS THAT SATISFY

It's Tuesday and Jesus has gone back to the Temple after having spent the night in Bethany just outside Jerusalem. As soon as He gets there the religious leaders start pelting Him with questions.

First, they want to know what gives Him the right to say and do the things He's saying and doing. Does the authority He's exercising come from God or from someone else? Jesus doesn't say. Instead, He tells three parables.

The first parable is about a father who has two sons, one of whom promises to do what the father asks him to do, but doesn't do it. The second parable is about a man who owns a vineyard cared for by tenants who end up killing the owner's son. The last parable is about guests that a king invites to the marriage feast of his son who are too busy doing their own thing to show up. The father, the owner, and the king all represent God, and what Jesus expects is for the religious leaders to see themselves as the disobedient son, the tenants who kill, and the guests who are more interested in what they want to do than what God wants them to do.

And they did. But the stories only made the religious leaders mad. They went on the attack with questions designed to embarrass Jesus. They asked Him whether or not they should pay taxes, and they asked Him what He thought about resurrection of the dead. One of the men in the crowd even asked Jesus if there was one commandment more important than all the others, and if so, which one was it. Jesus' answer was both stunning and correct. He told them they were to love God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength and their neighbor as themselves.

The religious leaders decided not to ask Jesus any more questions, but then Jesus asked them one. Was the Messiah going to be a human being descended from King David or something more? They didn't know what to say, but the sparing was over. The religious leaders stood defiant in the face of the appeal Jesus had made to get them to accept the hand of friendship God was extending to them through His Son.

There was nothing left to do but tell the religious leaders how offensive their emphasis on detailed rule-keeping instead of mercy was to God. In a series of woes Jesus called the religious leaders blind guides and white-washed tombs full of dead men's bones. Their response was to make plans to kill him.

Jesus knew His death was certain now. He told his disciples that like a grain of wheat which has to fall to the ground and die in order for more grain to be produced, each of us must give up the life we know in order for a better one to be possible. But His soul was troubled as He thought about the pain involved in getting through the next few days.

As a crowd gathered around Him, Jesus told them He was going to be *lifted up* and die (the *lifting up* being a reference to crucifixion). He said that being lifted up would bring people to God and that God would be glorified. Then, recalling the first question He'd been asked that morning (which was by whose authority are you doing what you're doing), Jesus says "The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and... his commands lead to eternal life (John 12:49-50a NLV).

Karen Purnell

GIVING ALL TO GOD

Upon His arrival in Jerusalem Jesus was questioned by the Scribes and Pharisees because they wanted to find a reason to eliminate Him. They tried to flatter Him by saying, “You are truthful and don’t care what other people think”. Then they asked Him about whether or not they should pay taxes.

Jesus said to them, “Why are you trying to trick me? Bring me a coin.” Then He asked them whose image was on the coin. They said, “Caesar’s”. Jesus said, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.”

Everything we have comes from God. It is only right to return a portion of what He has given us back to Him. Scripture tells us we should return a tithe to God, which is 10% of our income.

When I was 55 years old I was not giving a tithe to my local Church. At that time I knew I was not totally in God’s will, so I started giving 10% to my church and lived on the rest. I didn’t buy a new car every year and I didn’t go on extravagant vacations, but I always had more than I needed. To this day I have given God my tithe and given it with a smile.

The Gospel of Mark and the Gospel of Luke include a story about a widow woman who put two small coins in the offering box at the Temple that day. Rich people put in bags of money, but Jesus said this widow woman put in more than all of them because she gave all she had to give. The rich people gave out of their surplus, but she gave everything she had, depending on God to take care of her. We don’t know how her story ended, but the God I know would have seen to it that her needs were met.

When as a congregation we truly hunger for God in our everyday life, and listen to God, He will speak to us. He will speak through the Scriptures and the messages that are delivered. Could He be asking you to give more of yourself and your resources back to God?

I long for the day when we turn to God fully. Can you imagine what could happen if we put all we have at God’s disposal? A revival could break out that would not only affect our church, but our city and beyond.

Bud Purnell



Wednesday Morning, April 13, 2022

EASTER AND THE RESURRECTION

Ice, snow, dreariness everywhere.
Dead leaves, grass, twigs.
Look, over to the left!
A patch of purple!
The crocuses have popped up through the dead leaves!
Over there, bluebells are shooting up.
Now come the hyacinths!
The brave daffodils are pushing their heads through the snow.
Spring is coming!

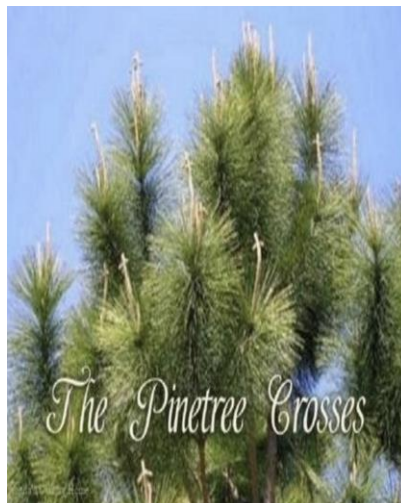
But what does that have to do with Easter and the Resurrection?
Jesus instructed His Disciples as they traveled to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover.
He prepared them for His crucifixion, death, and resurrection.
And prepared us at the same time.

Matthew 24:32-34, tells us to take a lesson from the fig tree. Leaves, beginning to appear on the fig tree, send us a message that summer is coming. Jesus taught that these things He was telling them had to come about before He would return. But these things they were experiencing were signs that Jesus' Second Coming was near. Just as we can trust the signs of new life coming in nature, we can trust Jesus' Word that He will return and take us home with Him.

The Disciples understood that Jesus would leave them and would return at the Second Coming and take them (and us) to our eternal home with Him. But they did not know when and where this would be. Neither do we. So we must be ready. Watch and study the signs. Put your trust in Jesus.
Trust and obey.
Be ready.

Each spring we see another sign – the sign of the pine trees.
About Good Friday, take a drive in your car and look at the pine trees. As you do, you will see new growth. This growth is in the shape of a cross. A sign of Jesus' return for all to see. Do you see this sign or do you overlook it?

Happy Easter
Carolyn Simpson



HUNGRY AND THIRSTY FOR GOD: FEASTING ON HIS WORD

As Jesus prepared for the cross, let's review some of His last documented events and discussions with the disciples from our Daily Bible Readings for today:

- Matthew 24:1-35 The Destruction of the Temple and the Signs of the End Times
- Matthew 24:36-51 The Day and Hour Unknown
- Matthew 25:1-13 The Parable of the Ten Virgins
- Matthew 25:14-30 The Parable of the Bags of Gold
- Matthew 25:31-46 The Sheep and Goats
- Matthew 26:1-5 The Plot Against Jesus
- Matthew 26:6-13 Jesus Anointed at Bethany
- Matthew 26:14-16 Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus
- Mark 13:1- 31 The Destruction of the Temple and the signs of the End Times
- Mark 13:32-37 The Day and Hour Unknown
- Mark 14:1-11 Jesus Anointed at Bethany
- Luke 21:5-38 The Destruction of the Temple and the signs of the End Times
- Luke 22:1-6 Judas Agrees to Betray Jesus

As we read these verses, what is Jesus telling the disciples and us?

I hear Jesus saying:

1. Nothing made by the hands of man will remain when I return.
2. I'm giving you signs of things that must happen before My return.
3. Only God knows the exact day and hour He will send His Son to get us.
4. Be prepared as the five virgins were.
5. Invest what He has given us, making sure we get a profitable return for Jesus.
6. There will be a final judgement. Our decisions will determine if we are a sheep or a goat.
7. As people plotted for Jesus' demise, don't be surprised when they plot against you.
8. Jesus appreciates all that we do with and for Him. Nothing is considered wasteful when it's for His glory!
9. If Judas betrayed Him, rest assured that close friends and family will betray us.

So how do we prepare for the unknown day and hour?

Feast on His Word!

Be aware.

Follow the instructions He gave us in His BIBLE (Basis Instructions Before Leaving Earth).

PUSH (Pray Until Something Happens).

Have FAITH (Forsaking All I Trust Him).

BELIEVE (Because Emmanuel Lives I Expect Victory Every-time).

Have HOPE (He Only Provides Everything).

Remember JESUS (Jesus' Endowment Saved Unworthy Souls).

And lastly think of COFFEE (Christ Offers Forgiveness For Everyone Everywhere, will you??)

Even though Jesus was facing His vicarious death, He continued to teach us how to be prepared for His return. I hope you will be ready, but until then, let's represent Him well!!!

Michele Crider

Maundy Thursday Morning, April 14, 2022

JESUS: THE BREAD OF LIFE

“I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me shall not hunger...(John 6:35a)”

Several months ago, I became serious about a diet for diabetes. My impetus was the doctor’s statement: “If you don’t lower your blood sugar levels, I will prescribe insulin shots for you.” She was not threatening, just giving me the consequences if I did not turn away from my high carbohydrate diet. It meant giving up bread. My blood sugar count is now in the normal range; I lost weight; I have more energy. However, I could not turn away from bread. I am a “carboholic”. I craved bread. What has saved me and satisfied my yearning is a low-calorie, low-carb bread.

God provides physical and spiritual sustenance for us. From Genesis, “*I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food (Genesis 1:29)*” to Revelation, “*On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month (Revelation 22:2)*”, food is discussed frequently in the Bible, literally and metaphorically. Bread, made from wheat and other seed-bearing plants, was an important staple in the diets of Israelites and all other civilizations. It is mentioned many times in the Bible. In the Old Testament, there are these stories of God’s provision: Joseph’s plan to save people from the famine he knows is coming; God providing manna each day to feed the Israelites in the wilderness; Boaz’s respect for God’s law by leaving wheat on the edges of his field for the poor people, like Ruth, to glean; God directs a poor widow to provide bread for Elijah. New Testament examples include: Satan tempting Jesus to use His power to turn stones into bread; the disciples pick wheat on the Sabbath; feeding 5000 from five loaves of bread and two fish, and, of course, The Last Supper.

From Genesis to Revelation, God’s Word points to the coming of His Son and the salvation He gives to us. He wants us to love Him as He loves us. He is not threatening, just giving us the consequences: “*Very truly I tell you, the one who believes has eternal life. I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, yet they died. But here is the bread from heaven, which anyone may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world (John 6:47-51).*” I believe that Jesus is the Son of God, that He died on the cross and that He arose from the dead three days later. I crave to be more like Jesus. What has saved me and satisfied my yearning is the Bread of Life - Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior. He wants to feed your soul, too.

Blessed Easter to all,
Kathy Fraley



SATISFYING HUNGER AND THIRST

When we feel our gut rumbling, most of us—if we are fortunate enough to have a full pantry—respond by getting something to eat! And when our throat feels parched, we instinctively reach for a drink. But do we recognize hunger and thirst of the soul? Does your spirit just feel like something is missing and you can't even put a name on the emptiness gnawing inside? Jesus in God's Holy Word has left instructions for satisfying this spiritual hunger and thirst.

On the Thursday before His Roman crucifixion the next day, Jesus observed the Jewish tradition of Pesach or Passover with His twelve disciples. These were men who had left their occupations to follow Jesus whom they recognized as the Jewish Messiah. They had become His students, but also His closest friends.

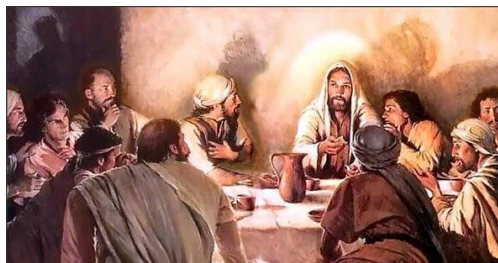
The Pesach or Passover is a celebration of God's deliverance of the Hebrews while they were still enslaved in ancient Egypt. As the number of the Hebrew population grew, the Egyptian Pharaoh (fearing an uprising) sought to curtail such an increase by ordering newborn Hebrew baby boys to be slaughtered. In order to be spared a visit from the Angel of Death, the Hebrews' Jehovah or Lord God gave them a specific command for their situation. They were to apply a sacrificial lamb's blood to the top and sides of their door frames which would be a sign for the angel to 'passover' those households.

One of the Hebrew babies spared would grow up to be their deliverer Moses who would lead his people out of their bondage in Egypt. But it would be forty years later before the Hebrews would set foot on the land previously promised to their patriarch Abraham. This delay was because of their disobedience, in particular allowing worship of other gods besides Yaweh [pronounce YAH way]—Jehovah God—and worship of idols.

Jews have struggled to gain and maintain control of what they consider their original homeland throughout history. In 1948 the Provisional Government of Israel under the leadership of David Ben-Gurion declared Israel a sovereign state and was recognized as such by the United States of America under President Harry S. Truman. Unrest, conflict, war, peace treaties, and broken treaties dot the Middle East timeline as the State of Palestine does not recognize the legitimacy of Israel's occupation.

The world into which Jesus was born, lived, and died was under the occupation of the ancient Roman Empire. Jews were not enslaved but were subject to Roman laws. They were free to exercise their religion. And thus, the Passover meal is an important event at that time.

During their observance of their Passover meal in a private upper room in Jerusalem, Jesus is trying to prepare His disciples for the horrible events which are going to occur soon: His betrayal, arrest, trial, flogging, and a shameful tortuous death brought on by Roman crucifixion. Two elements of the meal—the bread and the wine—do more than satisfy their physical hunger and thirst and fulfill the requirement of observing Jewish Passover. The flat unleavened bread and the local fermented wine take on a new significance. For early Jewish Christians, the commemoration of this last meal of Jesus with His disciples is called The Lord's Supper.



“When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat the Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’” (Luke 22:14-20 Holy Bible New International Version)

It is at this Last Supper that Jesus announces that one of the twelve at the table is going to betray Him. They are startled and begin to question who might do so. Peter says, *“Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death.”* (Luke 22:33 Holy Bible NIV) Jesus tells Peter he will deny he even knows Him, not just once but three times before the next morning!

And as each one asks if he will be the one to betray his Lord, Judas says, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” (Matthew 26:25A NIV)

And Jesus responds, *“Yes, it is you.”* (Matthew 26:25B NIV)

Then Judas Iscariot leaves the table to conduct his plan of identifying Jesus to those wanting to arrest Him. The other eleven disciples will slip into the shadows and watch events unfold.

Except for Judas Iscariot, Jesus’ disciples will satisfy their hunger and thirst for righteousness as Jesus taught them: *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”* (Matthew 5:6 NIV)

In the same way today, we fill ourselves up with feasting on the Word of God. Read it every day. Pray for understanding. Praise God for good times. But also ask Him for strength in troubled times. Assemble with other believers for encouragement and the energy which being part of a like-minded group brings. Support your believers’ assembly financially. Finally, do not neglect living a life of respect for others, helpfulness for others, and sharing the Gospel’s message of salvation. The hunger and thirst of your soul will be filled as you provide ministry to those physically and spiritually hungering and thirsting.

Following are the lyrics to a song of prophecy that I wrote. It encapsulates the deep hunger and thirst of those who practice the Jewish faith; but also Christian believers. My son and I are still working on the music to go with it.

I wrote the poem **Footsteps of Messiah** after reading a quote attributed to David Ben-Gurion, the first Prime Minister of the State of Israel: “Ezekiel 37 has been fulfilled and the nation of Israel is hearing the footsteps of the Messiah.” He was referring to the twentieth century nation of Israel officially declared on May 14, 1948, when Jewish people from around the globe were being reunited in the Biblical lands of their patriarch Abraham. For Ben-Gurion, there was the anticipation of the Messiah’s first coming. However, many Christians at that time saw Jews’ repatriation as a sign of the Messiah’s second coming.



FOOTSTEPS OF MESSIAH

(V.1) Do you hear the footsteps
Of Messiah drawing near?
Have you turned to listen
Before His face appears?
Wipe away your fears and doubts.
There's joy when you believe.
These times of trials point the way
To God's great jubilee!

(Chorus) Footsteps of Messiah
Leave their print on Zion's sand.
God's people reunited
Know His coming is at hand.
Footsteps of Messiah
Can be heard above earth's roar
For the clock of all the ages
Strikes with footsteps of the Lord.

(Bridge) Messiah's footsteps:
Stop and listen while you can.
Messiah's footsteps:
Don't ignore God's final plan.

(V. 2) Did you hear His footsteps
Long ago on Calv'ry's road?
Did you see salvation's plan
Before your eyes unfold?
He wiped away your guilt and shame,
Brought joy so full and free.
Now once again He beckons you
To listen and believe.

(Repeat Chorus) Footsteps of Messiah
Leave their print on Zion's sand.
God's people reunited
Know His coming is at hand.
Footsteps of Messiah
Can be heard above earth's roar
For the Clock of All the Ages
Strikes with footsteps of the Lord.

(Tag) Footsteps of the Lord.
Footsteps of the Lord.
Footsteps of the Lord...

(Keyboard: Optional 11 Dissonant Chimes)

By Connie Carlisle Polley, 2022
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Good Friday Morning, April 15, 2022

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR

John 18:14 -19:42

In my lifetime I have received many precious gifts. I had parents and grandparents who loved me and sacrificed for me, a sister and brother-in-law who are precious to me, a loving husband who is such a wonderful gift, two children I am so proud of, a son-in-law I could not love more, grandchildren who light up my world, a church and church family who mean the world to me, and many precious friends who have enriched my life beyond measure. All of these beautiful gifts have made my life so full and I am thankful for each one of them. I have known many different kinds of love in these relationships, all of them very special. I treasure each one and am thankful that I have been so very blessed by all of these relationships, but I want to share the greatest love of all. A love freely given that will last throughout all eternity, the love of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

My Jesus willingly laid down His life for me. No one took His life from Him. He was arrested, beaten, spit upon, jeered, denied, and deserted by His beloved disciples, nailed to a cruel cross, suffered and died an unimaginable death for me. He did this that I might be forgiven of my sins and know that He will never leave me nor forsake me. His death assured my forgiveness and His resurrection guaranteed that my eternal life would be spent in Heaven with Him. There is no greater gift we could ever receive than the one given to us by Jesus Christ. When He gave His life on the cross that day so many years ago He was thinking of ME. He was thinking of YOU. As we read and study the verses listed above we see the story of perfect love unfolding. My heart hurts with the cruelty of it all. His love is freely given because He loves and cherishes each one of us and wants to come into our hearts and share every moment of our lives, today, tomorrow, and always. We can't buy this precious gift. We can't earn it. I am not sure we can even fully comprehend all He went through on our behalf to purchase this priceless gift with His own blood, His own life.

The day I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior my life was changed forever. Not one moment of my life have I spent alone since that day. Jesus did not promise we would never have trials or that we would never feel pain or shed tears. This world can be hard and very cruel. What He does promise is that He will be with us through it all. Jesus hears my every prayer. He is my Comforter, my Friend, my Savior. His love is the greatest most precious gift of all. His love is greater than the love of our family or friends. Greater than any earthly treasure we may possess. I know when I breathe my last breath on this earth I will see His face and His outstretched arms of love. His love is perfect and I thank Him for Calvary.

As we think about Easter and its true meaning, I try always to make it a time of reflection. As a Christian I want to spend time thinking about my Savior's love for me. It's difficult to even think about the cruelty of His death, the horrible pain He endured for me so that I might be forgiven of my sins. I think of the wonder of the empty tomb and the fact death has no power over our Savior. Thank You, God, for your Son. Thank You, Jesus, for giving Your life for me. Thank You that I know I will spend all of eternity in Heaven with You. Thank You for the greatest blessing, the greatest gift anyone could ever have.

This Easter if you have never asked Jesus to come into your heart and forgive you of your sins, I pray with all my heart you will ask Him this moment to be your Lord and Savior. There is no more important decision you will ever make. You can KNOW your sins are forgiven and that because of His precious gift He will be with you every day of your life and you will spend eternity in Heaven with Him. It is really so simple. Tell God you know He sent His Son Jesus to give His life for your sins. Tell Jesus you know His death on the cross was for you. Tell Him you believe God raised Him from the dead and that He is seated at the right hand of God. You never have to be alone or face life alone again. You can experience the perfect love of our Lord and Savior.

Nancy Shewmaker



WERE YOU THERE WHEN THEY CRUCIFIED MY LORD? **Luke 22:54 – 23:55**

Luke was among many witnesses to the trials and crucifixion of Jesus...the Passion. He witnessed and wrote about Peter's denial...and Jesus' prediction of that denial.

Jesus was big news! Crowds had followed him during his ministry and a crowd had formed that followed Jesus as the guards of the high priest took Jesus to the high priest's house. Peter had held back in the crowd following Jesus to observe from a distance. Three members from the crowd accused Peter of being with Jesus and three times he denied Jesus. As soon as the third denial was spoken, the rooster crowed....and Jesus turned and looked through the crowd. Jesus' eyes met Peter's and Peter ran out weeping.

Have you ever denied Christ? Probably not, at least not in the way that Peter did...he denied knowing him COMPLETELY. However, on a day to day basis we often deny Jesus' influence to guide us in our lives.

As you read today's Bible passage, you will follow Jesus to the Sanhedrin to be tried, then to Pilate for trial. Pilate found no fault in Jesus under the law, but finding out Jesus was from Galilee, he sent Jesus to Herod for Judgment. Herod asked Him many questions, but Jesus did not reply. Herod, hearing nothing incriminating, mocked Jesus and sent Him back to Pilate.

Pilate called together the priests, rulers, and the people and offered to release Jesus, still finding no fault in Him. However the mob broke out loudly saying "Crucify Him", and the voiced of the mob, led by the chief priests and rulers prevailed and Pilate released Jesus to their will.

Jesus was beaten and led away to be crucified. A large crowd followed him, some chanting and mocking, others crying and lamenting. Were you in that crowd? Were you in that crowd who watched the nails being driven in Jesus' hands and feet to hold Him to the cross. Crucifixion was the harshest form of death known to the Roman Empire. Jesus suffered, and died.

One of Jesus' followers, Joseph of Arimathea, begged the body of Jesus, wrapped it in linen and laid it into a tomb that had been carved in the stone, where no one had yet been lain. His body was witnessed as to being dead, laid in the tomb, and a stone was rolled over the entrance.

Were you there? In a way, we all were. Jesus was the Holy Lamb slaughtered for our sins. Around 700 years before Jesus was born, the Prophet Isaiah said "...But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed."

Praise God that Jesus did not stay dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification. (Romans 4:25)

In the 20th Chapter of John, Jesus said to Thomas (and the group) "...Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

So in a way, we were there. Our need was present at the crucifixion. "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15)

Phil Shewmaker



Saturday Morning, April 16, 2022

TRUST

Trust- a firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something

He was born as an infant, grew as a child, and then became a man. Jesus was born like all of us, but did anyone know what was going to happen in His future? Only God knew. For Him to come to this world as we did, it was a big deal. Many people believed back then that He would come as a man, not a baby.

To be Mary would be scary, and even a bigger deal, because she was probably 13-16 years old when she had God's child. But did anyone tell her that one day her Son would walk on water, heal the blind, calm a storm, heal the deaf, and one day save us all?

It was sad to see Jesus on the cross because He was beaten and spit upon. For everyone who loved Him it must have been tough, but look at it this way...He did it for you and me. That means so much to me when I think about His pain during all of this. God had a plan for Jesus. Before we were even created God knew what would happen. Then look at it this way, God loves us and so does Jesus so this is why it happened. Jesus could have jumped off that cross and said "stop"! But, did He? No, because He wanted to fulfill God's plan that whoever confesses that they have sin, believes that Jesus is God's Son who came down to this earth, and confesses their faith can go to heaven and not spend the rest of their years in hell.

The next day had to be the best for the people because Jesus would rise up from the dead, but for now He was dead. After they knew He was dead, He was put into a tomb wrapped in cloth and placed in there with a guard standing outside. The only reason of this was because of the prophecies. So He laid there until the next day when He would rise up from the dead and fulfill the prophecy and God's plan.

With all of this it is clear to say that God has a plan for everyone. Jesus fulfilled God's plan by trust. It goes to show that we need to trust God's plans because if we do, something amazing will come from it. It did for Jesus and will for us this very day. Now, do you trust God and His plan for you?

*"Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding;
In all your ways submit to him and he will make your path straight."* Proverbs 3:5-6

Sincerely,
Emma Towles



THE TOMB – IT’S NOT THE ENDING

“Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.” Luke 23:56

Springtime! Flowers start to bloom, birds are nesting, and the earth emerges from cold, dark winter to warm, sunny days of spring. Spring always seems like a new start, a welcomed new beginning. I always look forward to planting flowers and vegetables and getting my lawn as green as can be. Yard work can be exhausting, but so rewarding.

After Jesus’ death, certainly, His friends, followers, and disciples were overcome with grief and filled with sadness over this incredible loss. Likely, some stood at the tomb thinking this was an ending, not a beginning. “Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes” to anoint His body.

Like spring, in accepting Jesus as one’s personal Savior, one comes alive! We are dead to sin and alive to a new life in Christ – a new life through being born again in Him. There is an insatiable hunger and thirst to know all about Him, to live our daily lives trusting, submitting, and surrendering everything to Him. In this newness, we long to be filled with His Spirit. To grow spiritually and be a true disciple, we must hunger and thirst for God above all things.

When Mary Magdalene and the other Mary later returned to the tomb of Jesus, they probably did not foresee this as the beginning of the gospel to be shared over and over for thousands of years. Yet this was not the end. It was, in many ways, the BEGINNING. Through the death of Jesus Christ, we are promised eternal life through His sacrifice, if we open our hearts and lives to Him. Through His death, burial, and resurrection, we are saved to follow the risen Lord.

My prayer during this Lenten season is to have a new beginning, a renewed and intense hunger and thirst for God in my daily walk with Him. Let that be the prayer of all of us.

Lord, fill me with an overwhelming desire to be closer to You, to live in holiness and obedience to You. Fill me with a hunger and thirst to do all things that are pleasing to You, that glorify You, and to share the good news of salvation and the tomb that could not hold You!

HE IS RISEN!

Jan Miller



Easter Sunday Morning, April 17, 2022

HE WALKS WITH ME, AND HE TALKS WITH ME **John 20:1-25**

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance. John 20:1 (NIV)

The beloved gospel hymn, “In the Garden,” was inspired by the story of Mary Magdalene going to the empty tomb as described in John 20. The hymn recalls what happened once Mary realized that the man walking and talking with her was the resurrected Jesus and not the gardener as she had supposed.

What the hymn does not convey is the anguish, tears, and doubt that preceded the joyful revelation that Jesus was, indeed, alive! Mary must have been frantic when she reported to Peter and John that she had found the tomb empty (verse 2). Those two disciples literally raced to the garden tomb to find it just as Mary had described, but, according to verse 9, “They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.”

The disciples went back to their homes according to John 20:11 as Mary, who had returned to the burial site, stood outside the empty tomb crying. John’s gospel describes how two angels in white visited her and asked, “Why are you crying?” I can imagine that her response, “They have taken my Lord away, and I don’t know where they have put him,” came through desperate sobs.

Then, though she did not recognize Him at first, Jesus appeared to Mary with the same question, but added a second, “Who is it you are looking for?” Finally, when Jesus called her name, Mary began to understand the events that had transpired and became the first person to share the Good News of the resurrection.

For those who followed Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the other women, the eleven Disciples, and “more than five hundred of the brothers” (I Corinthians 15:6), understanding would come gradually after several appearances of the risen Lord to the Apostles over a period of forty days before Jesus was taken up into heaven. Understanding would continue to grow as the Holy Spirit taught the believers and led them to take the Gospel message to the whole world.

On this Easter Sunday, we, like those earliest followers of The Way, have probably come to this day through much anguish, tears, and doubt. And, as we struggle sometimes to grow in our faith, we may continue to encounter these things. But when we prayerfully walk and talk with Jesus in His word, we too, like Mary, can testify, “I have seen the Lord!”

God our heavenly Father, thank You for raising Your Son from the grave and for giving us the testimony of those who walked and talked with the risen Lord. Like Mary, may we be willing to tarry in the places You would meet us so that our faith may grow. In Christ’s Name, Amen.

Steve Skaggs



NO LONGER HUNGERING NOR THIRSTING

Easter morning, fair skies, beautiful sunshine! Seemingly the perfect day. But this was not like Easter mornings my family and I had experienced in the past. My 52-year-old husband and the father of our three adult children was in the Hospice Care Unit of our local downtown hospital. His body which had been vibrant, moving, and muscular was now listless and reduced to a skeletal figure.

There was no longer verbal language. What was left of life communicated itself through shallow breaths and uneasy moans and groaning. Death was not coming easily. Systems were shutting down, but his strong heart did not want to let go.

I was keeping vigil at his bedside while two of our children were fulfilling their Sunday morning church responsibilities. Our son was working in what our church called 'media,' making sure microphones and lighting were adjusted so as not to detract from the atmosphere of worship. Our older daughter was serving as pianist in another church. Our younger daughter was in college out of town, but managed to make the drive home and back every week-end in order to support me during this burdensome time.

I lifted a prayer to God while I waited for them to join me. "O, God. I ask that you come quickly, even on this Hallelujah Day of rejoicing, to escort this imperfect one into the perfection of Your kingdom. May he leave the flesh of earth behind and soar to a place of peace, comfort, and reunion with the God of his salvation. But, Lord, if not today, one day soon. Amen."

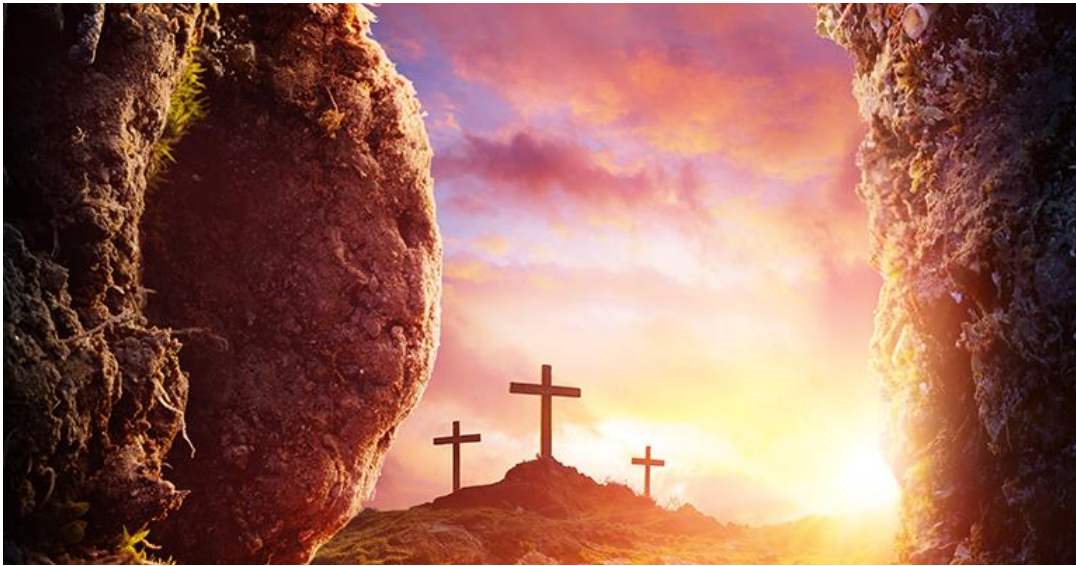
Around 6:00 p.m. our children and I were in an outer room when the nurse told us to return to his bedside as he was passing. When we knew he was gone we sang, *"We are standing on holy ground, and I know that there are angels all around. Let us praise Jesus now. We are standing in His presence on holy ground."* (WE ARE STANDING ON HOLY GROUND, Words and Music by Geron Davis)

Life as we know it on this earth has hunger and thirst which must be satisfied for the physical body to survive. But we also have spiritual hunger and thirst. We fill that void of our soul by feasting on the Word of God.

In the days before my husband entered Hospice Care, he asked me to bring his crimson personal-sized New International Version Bible to the hospital. I later found the notes and Scripture references he had written on its end leaves. One of these Bible verses is: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16 Holy Bible NIV). A mortal being had discovered the Way to immortality and filled his hunger and thirst for God. He feasted on God's Word. And he left behind a written testimony to the faith and trust in his heart.

By Connie Carlisle Polley, 2022
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Happy
Easter!

