

HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL GUIDE 2025

"He Will Save Us!"



Believe

in the Lord Jesus,
and You Will Be Saved

Acts 16:31

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THE HOLY SEASON: LENT / EASTER

In earlier 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 Christian life. For us, Lent 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. Lent's focus 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 into the joyous and glorious season of Easter.

These Holy Week devotionals, written by different generations of our church family members, are reflections of this year's theme, "*He Will Save Us!*". 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 pray 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 this week. Let this devotional guide be part of your daily personal or family worship as you immerse yourself in God's 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!



CHURCH STAFF

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Joanna Wright, Interim Organist 239-0316

HOLY WEEK SERVICES

SUNDAY, APRIL 13: 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.

5:00 p.m. We will celebrate the Jewish Seder known to the church as "The Last Supper". We will experience the food, the songs, and the prayers Jesus and His disciples experienced over 2,000 years ago. The service and meal will be in the Christian Life Center.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17: MAUNDY THURSDAY

7:00 p.m. The Youth Choir and Deacons will lead in "Mighty to Save!". We will partake in the Lord's Supper as we remember Christ's work on the cross and His salvation plan for us. We are reminded to proclaim His saving power and love. [Worship Livestream](#) is available.

FRIDAY, APRIL 18: GOOD FRIDAY

7:00 p.m. The Adult Choir and Narrators will present "*Tenebrae: A Service of Shadows*" by Heather Sorenson which follows the Tenebrae tradition beginning in the eighth century of the early church. In an atmosphere of darkness and candles, music and scripture, we will remember the final hours of Christ's life on earth as He prepared for and suffered death on the cross. [Worship Livestream](#) is available.

SUNDAY, APRIL 20: EASTER CELEBRATION

9:00 a.m. We celebrate the glorious Resurrection of Jesus Christ! God's Word will be spoken through proclamation and music mainly from our church staff.

10:45 a.m. We continue the celebration of Christ's Resurrection as God's Word is spoken through proclamation and music by the Adult Choir. Come and fill His house as we celebrate Jesus' remarkable Resurrection! [Worship Livestream](#) is available.



DAILY BIBLE READINGS

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

Sunday, March 24	Matthew 21:1-11 Mark 11:1-11 Luke 19:29-44 John 12:12-19
Monday, March 25	Matthew 21:12-20 Mark 11:12-19 Luke 19:45-46
Tuesday, March 26	Matthew 21:21 - 23:39 Mark 11:27 - 12:44 Luke 20:1 - 21:4 John 12:20-50
Wednesday, March 27	Matthew 24:1 - 26:16 Mark 13:1 - 14:11 Luke 21:5 - 22:6
Thursday, March 28	Matthew 26:17-56 Mark 14:12-52 Luke 22:7-53 John 13:1 - 18:13
Friday, March 29	Matthew 26:57 - 27:61 Mark 14:53 - 15:47 Luke 22:54 - 23:55 John 18:14 - 19:42
Saturday, March 30	Matthew 27:62-65 Luke 23:56
Sunday, March 31	Matthew 28:1-15 Mark 16:1-13 Luke 24:1-49 John 20:1-25



Palm Sunday Morning, April 13, 2025

SALVATION

The theme for this year is *“He Will Save Us!”*

Psalm 55:16

As for me, I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me.

The Easter season is a time of reflection. When you see the cross, your mind goes to the time of the crucifixion. The picture of Jesus hanging there with outstretched arms. It is an agonizing image of pain and sorrow. It reminds us that Christ took on our sin.

Romans 5:10

For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

We remember that after He died, He arose and we have a beautiful image of the stone rolled away. We can picture in our mind Christ in a white robe, suspended in the sky, with a glow all around him.

Luke 24:6-7

He is not here, but is risen: remember how He spoke unto you when He was in Galilee, saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’

All of His life had a purpose.

1 John 4:14

And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world.

Is this a story we read and reflect on only during the Lenten season? Do we keep the meaning all year long? *“He Will Save Us!”* but, you have to ask.

John 3:16

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Have you asked Him to be your Savior?

Glenda Coddington



ONLY JESUS SAVES!

John 12:12-19

On that first Palm Sunday, crowds of pilgrims streamed into Jerusalem for the Jewish Passover. They loved celebrating the Israelites' liberation from Egyptian bondage and how God made that exodus possible! From a distance Jesus and His followers were spotted. The people of the city, including all of those who had come for the feast, became a frenzied crowd and ran out to meet Him. Many knew Him. Others knew about Him. What mighty hopes and expectations they had! Since this miracle man had raised Lazarus from the dead, some thought that surely, He could save them from the domination of Rome.

Many people thought that Jesus had come to sit on the throne of David as a military king instead of a spiritual king. They thought that their national liberator would soon rule the land! They waved palm branches which were a sign of what they thought of Jesus. The palm branch was used on coins and in the Temple feasts as a continual reminder of the Maccabees' accomplishments when they delivered the Temple and the city from Syrian conquerors. To wave these fronds in the face of Jesus was a symbolic way of encouraging Him to do the same against the Romans.

The people shouted, "*Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!*" The word "Hosanna" was used to express adoration and joy; however, this acclamation of praise also meant "*Save us, deliver us now, we pray*". It is based on Psalm 118:25-26 which says, "*O Lord, save us: O Lord, grant us success. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.*" Shouting "hosanna" made it apparent that many thought of Jesus as their conqueror – the One who would save them in a militaristic manner. They thought that this One who was coming in the name of the Lord was on His way to the conquest. They were looking for a king who would shatter and smash their enemies instead of saving their souls.

The people obviously missed what Jesus was showing them by the way He entered their city. He was riding on a young donkey which was part of Jesus' obedience to the Father's will. He was coming as the Messiah in just the way Zechariah had said He would come. "*Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion (Jerusalem); see, your king is coming on a donkey's colt.*" If Jesus had come as a nationalistic king, He would have ridden a horse, a warrior's stallion. But He came riding on a donkey, a sign of peace. Jesus was like the eye of the hurricane. Around Him was chaos; within Him was peace. The Kings of Kings – the Prince of Peace had come!

Yes, Jesus came to save!! And He is still here to save!! Many are looking for salvation in the wrong places. Some people are looking to governments, policies, wealth, professors, politicians, preachers, etc. to save them. Only Jesus saves!! Have you allowed Him to save you?

Acts 16:31 reminds us to "*Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.*" As an eight-year-old child, I did exactly that and have never regretted asking Jesus to be my Savior. Romans 10:9 says, "*That if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.*" If you are not a Christian, Jesus wants to save you today! Will you let Him? Only Jesus can save us!!! Only then will you know peace in this world!

Linda Barnes Popham



Monday Morning, April 14, 2025

THE RIGHT-NESS OF JESUS' ANGER

Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'" Mark 11:17-19

After cleansing the buyers, sellers, and traders from the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Jesus teaches all those around Him from the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah — which most of them knew very well. I wanted to learn from this passage since it is the only example of Jesus' righteous anger while on earth. The right-ness of GOD's anger regarding the misuse of His House is something I feel is easy to skip over or forget about.

If you talk to many younger people today, they will reference their "triggers" -- things that "set them off" or evoke difficult or traumatic feelings inside themselves. I think GOD can relate here when churches are sold and bought, due to lack of use, for conversion into nightclubs, apartments, and restaurants. Unfortunately, I have been in all these. Worship and prayer among GOD's gathered people is our primal contact with our Creator / our Father. Today, when our Houses of Prayer fall into disuse, this must trigger great sorrow in GOD. We are so many Created Beings who do not want continual contact with our Creator/Sustainer, and we distract ourselves with the buying / selling / trading of wares that may or may not be related to the worship of GOD. These effects can be far-reaching, beyond the physical walls of our House of Worship. We make money to buy coffees and streaming services, brand new vehicles, and vacations then we question in our hearts how much is "enough" to tithe. So much of my working life can separate me from prayer, worship, and the daily reading of GOD's Word. The same was true when I was studying in college -- many, many distractions at a Christ-based college!

When I mull over these cleansing of the Temple passages in scripture, I must confess they "trigger" me. I have lived way over half of my life in an environment -- day in, day out — of anger. Never knowing when the next outburst of anger toward me would occur has been damaging to my soul. I know now, this anger was sin and though undeserved, I also began to sin in the same way. When I imagine this scene with Jesus in the Temple perhaps, like me, those around Jesus saw it as being "out of character" for Him. The anger (might I say, rage?) Jesus exhibits scares me and surprises me at first, but GOD's right-ness in His anger becomes a beautiful well of comfort and refreshment the more I contemplate it! Thanks be to our GOD who has established boundaries of rightness and wrongness. Our GOD who is the same yesterday, today and forever. And I praise GOD who says over and over again "do not fear", "do NOT fear". As I draw into fellowship with Jesus on His cleansing of the Temple, my fear is relieved because my earthly experiences have been covered over by the perfected example of the right-ness of His anger. Jesus' Love for me and His loving embrace is the antidote for my "triggers". This is what I had been missing in the angry situations of my life.

Today, you can accept Jesus' mercy — He could have destroyed the entire Temple with one flick of His finger — but that would not have been right for GOD. You can accept Jesus' goodness today. Jesus had genuine sorrow that the folks in His day in the Temple refused to have a loving relationship with their Father. Exodus 25:8-9 tells GOD's Words to Moses for His people regarding the first dwelling place among His people: *"And let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them. According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings, just so you shall make it."*

The Temple became the sanctuary of GOD's dwelling with His Holy and beloved people. Jesus could justly see how far they (and we, at times) had walked from that Loving relationship of worship and praise. I appreciate today more fully Jesus' right-ness in His anger at those misusing His Temple. As a result of Jesus' precious and ultimate sacrifice on the Cross, I am able to be a permanent sanctuary for GOD. My whole heart, mind, soul, and physical body is my Living sacrifice to the One who embraces me, loves me, and guides me ~ He has saved me! Day by day, I can live the Resurrected Life now through my right relationship with Jesus.

Linda Adkins

JESUS CLEANSSES

Matthew 21:12-19

In the beginning passages of Matthew 21 we find Jesus entering the city of Jerusalem during the week of Passover. He was riding the colt and arriving amid praises from the people. As we know now, this is just before Jesus' crucifixion. (Matthew 21:12-13). Jesus headed over to the Temple, as many others were, to worship. What He saw greatly angered Him. Scripture tells us Jesus entered the temple and threw out the merchants who were buying and selling. He also threw out those there to worship who were buying, not just those selling. He also turned over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves. These merchants were most likely operating in the outer courts of the Temple. This was the area where the Gentiles, and anyone from around the world who was not a Jew, could come and pray. With all this commotion going on, it was impossible for anyone to pray. Jesus said that *"My house shall be called a house of prayer"*. That is what He was trying to restore. Then we see the merchants, who in cooperation with the priests, cheated visitors to Jerusalem and the Temple by giving them no choice but to buy "approved" sacrificial animals and currencies at inflated prices. Thus, Jesus called this marketplace "a den of thieves". Jesus cleansed the Temple before His crucifixion which gives all of us an example of what we should do to our temples, in this case our bodies and spirits, before we celebrate Easter.

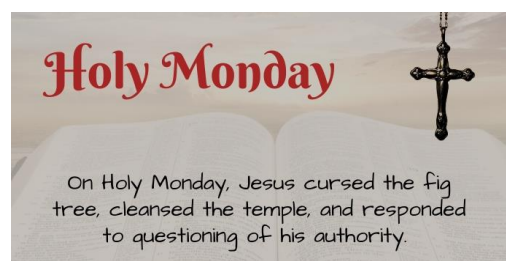
(Matthew 21:14) Then Jesus begins to heal the blind and the lame who came to Him. Most likely, they were the ones in the outer court seeking to pray, since the blind and lame were restricted to this area but, they too were hindered by all the disturbances. Jesus carried out God's compassionate work right there in many ways. This is an example for us to have compassion for those around us as the feet and hands of the Holy Spirit who lives in each of those who believe.

When Jesus did all these things, the Jewish leaders were indignant. (Matthew 21:15-17). This was their response to the wonderful things Jesus did in the Temple that day. They were even indignant over the praise of the children who recognized the power of Jesus and his work in the Temple. They were shouting *"Hosanna to the Son of David!"*. When the chief priests and the scribes asked Jesus if He heard what the children were saying, He said it was "perfect praise" in the ears of God. The hypocrisy of the religious leaders is striking. Their greed and taking advantage of the people in the Temple didn't bother them but the children's praise of Jesus more than angered them. Do we recognize how we view the miracles that happen around us daily? Do we see them through the religious leaders' eyes or through the eyes of the children? How do we respond when good things are pointed out to us?

(Matthew 21:18-19) In the morning, Jesus was returning to the city and was hungry. He saw a fig tree with leaves on it. With this type of fig tree, it usually bore figs when the leaves were present, but it did not have any figs. Jesus cursed the tree and said to it, *"Let no fruit grow on you ever again."* Immediately the fig tree withered away. In this acted-out-parable, Jesus warned of a coming judgment upon an unfruitful Israel and her leaders. It showed God's disapproval of people who are all showy leaves and no fruit. Are we all promise and no action or are we living the words of Jesus?

Jesus did all of this and more, mere days before facing what He knew was before Him. Easter is a wonderful time to ask these questions. Finally, we must ask ourselves, how are we living life daily since we do not know what day or hour Jesus is coming back or what day or hour we will be called back home? Think about it this Easter.

Easter Blessings,
Danny Hass



Tuesday Morning, April 15, 2025

TRUE FAITH IN JESUS SAVES

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!” Matthew 7:21-23 NIV

When reading Jesus’ words in Matthew, some might have concern. What does Jesus mean? Jesus will not hear and save even “those who drive out demons and perform miracles in Jesus’ name”? That’s frightening, right?

“..only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven...will enter Heaven.” Who are those who do the work of the Father? It’s interesting that in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus refers to God as “My Father”. Jesus came to do the will of His Father and asks that we do the same by being **true disciples** and not the false disciples/believers Jesus describes. How do we test ourselves to know if we are true disciples and truly doing the work of the Father? John 14:12,15-17 tells us how:

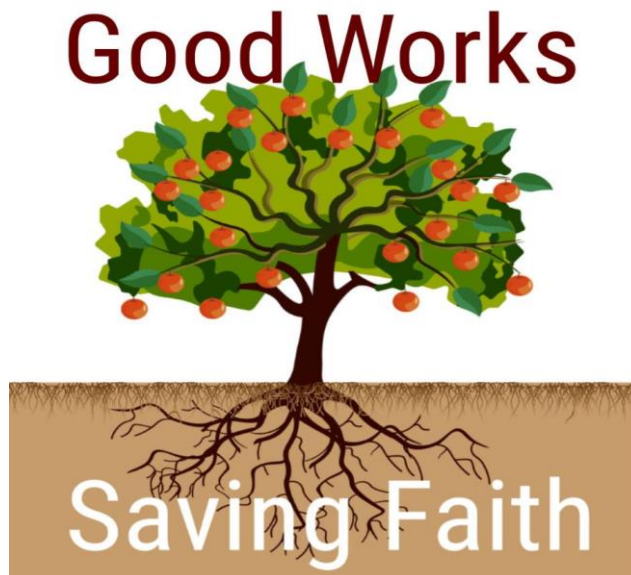
“Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father.; “If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever—the Spirit of truth.”

Christians sometimes ask if it is Faith or Works that save us? Galatians 2:16 answers that question clearly:

“...know that a person is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So, we too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law, because by the works of the law no one will be justified.”

As Christians, we always want to be assured of our salvation. When we truly believe in Jesus and truly love Him, we will have the Holy Spirit who guides us and leads us to do His works. I pray that all will have true faith in Jesus!

Happy Easter,
Chris Towles



BLESSED

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to His great mercy, He caused us to be born again to a living hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” I Peter 1:3

First of all, I thank God I grew up in a home knowing there was a God who loved me from a very early age. I’m grateful for those like Mr. Baird who was my three-year-old Sunday School class teacher, the two Kathys who taught my preschool choir, and my Training Union and GA leaders who taught me how much God loved the world and me.

Then came our church’s Revival services for a week in the Fall of my second-grade year. I can’t give you the points of the sermon, but I remember the evangelist talking about Jesus asking Zacchaeus to come down out of that tree. I knew He was offering something I didn’t have. I went to my parents’ room that night and tried to tell them about my tender heart hearing Jesus’ voice. They took me to talk with Dr. Kruschwitz, our pastor, later that week after school one day. He talked with me and made sure I had a clear understanding of my answer to Jesus’ call.

The following Sunday morning I “walked down the aisle” and professed my faith in Jesus. The next Sunday, Carolyn, David, and I were baptized. (God has been working in our hearts since that day, praise His Name!)

Had I lived a life full of sin as a seven-year-old? Actually, I have committed way more sins in the 57 years after my salvation. Yet, I know I am forgiven; His grace is enough; He walks with me, and He talks with me every day!

I don’t want to think of decisions I might have made along the way if I didn’t have His still, small voice to guide me through the years.

Those three 7-year-olds:

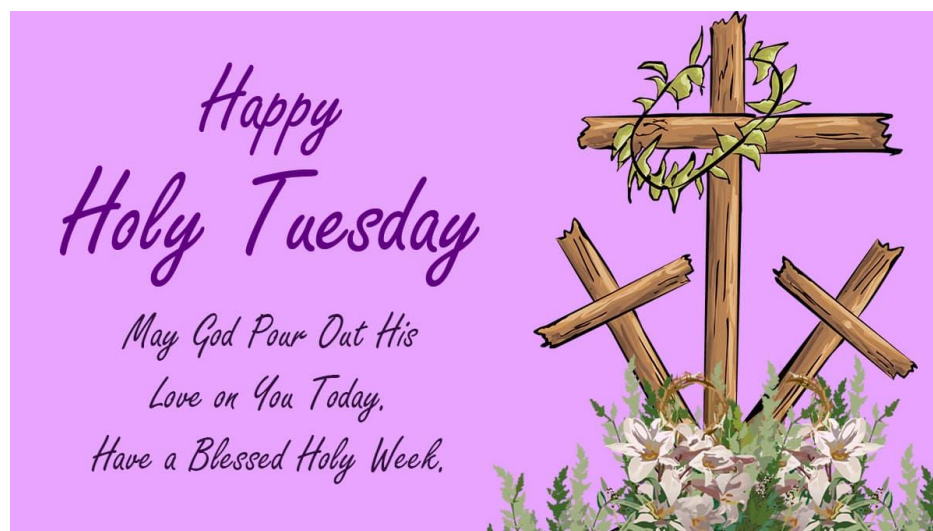
One became a sales manager,

One owned an accounting firm,

One was a piano teacher.

But it’s all the same: “He saved us to share His glory, He saved us to show His love!”

Karen Love



Wednesday Morning, April 16, 2025

JESUS SAVES!

The week leading up to Easter Sunday can be busy for many of us, because we often get caught up in making sure all the plans are perfect. We have to get our outfits ready for church, prepare the food, make sure the family knows when everyone is getting together, etc. While all these Easter Sunday activities are fun, it is important for us to remember why we celebrate Easter in the first place, as well as what events led up to that day.

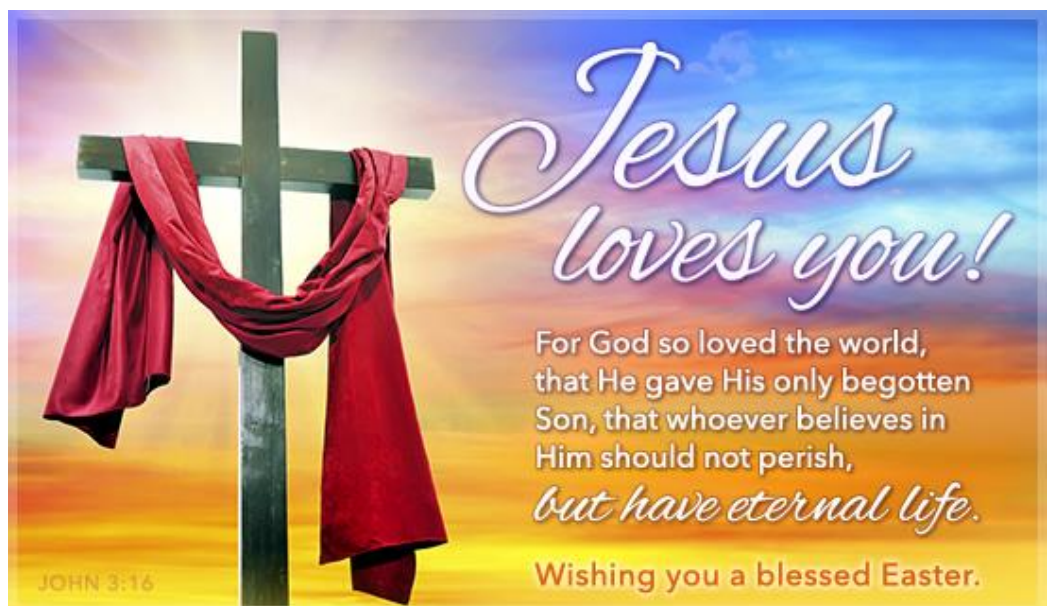
As we can see through Scripture, Jesus knew that He was going to face a brutal death in order to save the world from our sins. He gives us direction and warning on how to live for Him. In the book of Matthew, Jesus says, *“So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away”* (Matthew 24:33-35). By saying this, Jesus shows that He knows He will be gone from the earth soon, and that we must hold to what is true and everlasting, which is the Word of God.

We should be thankful that Jesus gives us a warning of what is to come, so that we may choose to follow Him. Jesus says, *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats”* (Matthew 25:31-32). Jesus will one day return to judge those on earth, and separate those who followed Him, from those who did not. This should give us hope in knowing that Jesus is coming back for His people, and it can also give us the desire to be one of them.

Jesus never tells us that being a Christian is going to be easy. In fact, He tells us that it will be quite the opposite; however, He gives us hope for the future. Jesus says, *“And you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved”* (Mark 13:13). Jesus makes it clear in this passage that following Him will not be easy, nor will it be the popular thing to do, but He reminds us that it will be what saves us.

In getting ready for Easter festivities this week, I encourage you to take time to think about the love that Jesus shows us, even in pointing to His own crucifixion.

Sincerely,
Lucas Seraphine



HE WILL SAVE US...WITH THE TRUTH!

When our daughter was seven or eight, we caught her in a lie. We assured her that she would be in less trouble if she told the truth than if she lied. As the years passed, we heard more truth from her mouth than we wanted to hear. To this day, she is one of the most honest people we know. We stressed truthfulness to our son also, but we did not require him to tell us everything; we decided that “what we don’t know, won’t hurt us”.

“What is this you have done?” These words sound like an exasperated parent, and it is – our Father in Heaven. Eve answered him, *“The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”* (Genesis 3:13 NIV) In other words, “the devil made her do it”. The Prince of the World began his war against God. In this world, we are confronted every day by sin – maybe our own, maybe that of other people, or false prophets, or governments. Jesus told the Pharisees: *“Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”* (John 8:44) Jesus gives us language that we can understand, *“I do not give you as the world gives. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”* (John 16:33b)

What we don’t know, can hurt us – forever. My favorite Bible verse is *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”* (John 14:6) The 2025 Reading Plan has been a blessing to me, and I discovered that the rest of Jesus’ words in this passage confirm my need for Jesus and repentance of my sins: *“No one comes to the Father except through me. If you really know me, you will know my Father as well.”* (John 14:7)

And that’s the Truth!

Love,
Kathy Fraley



Maundy Thursday Morning, April 17, 2025

THE LOVE OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR

Matthew 26:17-29

It is my prayer as I write this devotional, that I can share with you how very much our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ loves each of us. God's perfect, only Son, was given on that cruel cross so that we may have forgiveness of our sins, receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and have assurance that we will spend eternity in Heaven with Jesus. His body was broken for us. His precious blood spilled for us. There is no price we could ever pay to purchase this gift. There is no work we could ever do that would be enough to purchase our place in Heaven. It is a free gift.

My Jesus willingly lay 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 then nailed to a cruel cross. He suffered and died an unimaginable death for me. He did this so that I would 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. 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 I have ever been given. 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 deeper 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, and humiliation 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 giving me the greatest blessing, the greatest gift anyone could ever be given.

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 because of His precious gift He will be with you every day of your life. He will never leave you or forsake you. He will never leave you comfortless. You can have the assurance 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. Ask Him to forgive you and to come into your heart. 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 for all eternity. Salvation is a gift freely given; we need only to ask. You never have to be alone or face life alone again. You can experience the Perfect Love of our Lord and Savior. He is as close as your prayer today. He is waiting for you to ask Him to come into your heart.

Nancy Shewmaker

UNITY THROUGH PRAYER

“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” John 17:20-23 NIV

We all face something we don't want to do at some point in our lives. We may feel fear or unease, a heavy heart or maybe sorrow during those moments. We may wish it was past us or that by some miracle it did not need to happen. Those are the moments where we pray in earnest. That night after the supper, Jesus went to pray in the garden because as we see in Mark 14:36, He prayed *“Take this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”* He prayed that night not only for Himself, but for His disciples and for all believers that we would be united. Jesus prayed for us. He prayed for us, even knowing what He was about to endure; knowing He was going to be sacrificed for our sins. When we pray in those moments, do we pray for others to know? Do we pray for unity as Jesus did?

We all have our differences. We are all unique, wonderfully and fearfully made and because of that we have diverse opinions and interpretations which we sometimes allow to separate us. Yet thanks to Jesus, because of His willingness to follow God's will, we can be united despite our differences if we are willing to follow God's will.

It's easy to forget in our pain that we should pray for others, those who have hurt us. These are the moments where I don't want to pray, but I know it's what God wants me to do. When I started doing this, it was a struggle at first, but little by little, day by day, it became easier. The heavy burden my heart carried began to get lighter. The anger and resentment which caused me to be separated began to slowly be replaced by love. This would not be possible without Jesus showing His love for us that night after supper. His prayer for me to be united with everyone brings me closer to God. It's a great reminder that we must not focus on our hurts or differences but focus on our love for God which unites us all.

I pray that you experience His love this Easter season and throughout the years to come.

Lisa Payne



Good Friday Morning, April 18, 2025

JESUS IS SAVIOR

Matthew 26:57-67

The Lord Jesus made an exclusive claim, *“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one can come to the Father except through the Son”* (John 14:6). This claim was perfectly demonstrated in the trial and condemnation of Jesus recorded in all four Gospels.

After Jesus was arrested by the mob, they led Him to the home of the high priest Caiaphas to be tried. The Jewish council was convened for the “trial” of Jesus. All the religious/political VIPs—chief priests, scribes, and Sanhedrin congregated at the home of Caiaphas. The disciple Peter followed the mob that arrested Jesus from a distance. In God’s grand scheme of things, He brought them all together before Jesus to give them a chance to see God through Jesus, the Way.

With their one goal in mind—put Jesus to death—the tribunal wasted no time. On cue, one false witness after another told his tale, but nothing held water. Frustrations mounted as planted witnesses and their false testimonies were exposed by the Truth who stood before them, wrongly accused. Finally, someone stood up and misquoted Jesus saying, *“I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days”* (v. 61). The actual words of Jesus were, *“Destroy this temple (i.e. his body) and in three days I will raise it up”* (John 2:19). Jesus, the Truth, exposed all lies without saying a word.

The high priest, realizing he could not convict Jesus on account of false witnesses, put Jesus under oath. Caiaphas wanted to convict Jesus in His own words. Under oath, Jesus was asked *“Are you the Messiah, the Son of God?”* (v. 63). To this Jesus replied, *“You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven”* (v. 64 NASB). Jesus told the Truth about His Person - Messiah, His mission - lay down His life, and His power - sitting at the right hand of God. Jesus is the Giver of Life. Salvation is found in Him alone. The human court that sentenced Him to death will one day stand before the court of Heaven where Jesus sits at the right hand of God. Those who believe in Jesus will be given eternal life; those who refuse will perish.

Today is Good Friday. Out of the goodness of God’s heart, He gave us His Son so that we can become sons and daughters of God through Him who died for us.

Rev. George Payocong, Jr.



GOD IS WITH YOU

“Even when I go through the darkest valley, I fear no danger, for you are with me; your rod and your staff—they comfort me” Psalm 23:4

We will face many trials in our lives. Some will feel like we are all alone, while others know God is there. While sometimes we do not feel Him or wonder why He seems to have strayed, we are not alone in it all. When Jesus was on the cross, He felt as if God had abandoned Him to this cruel death.

“My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Matthew 27:46

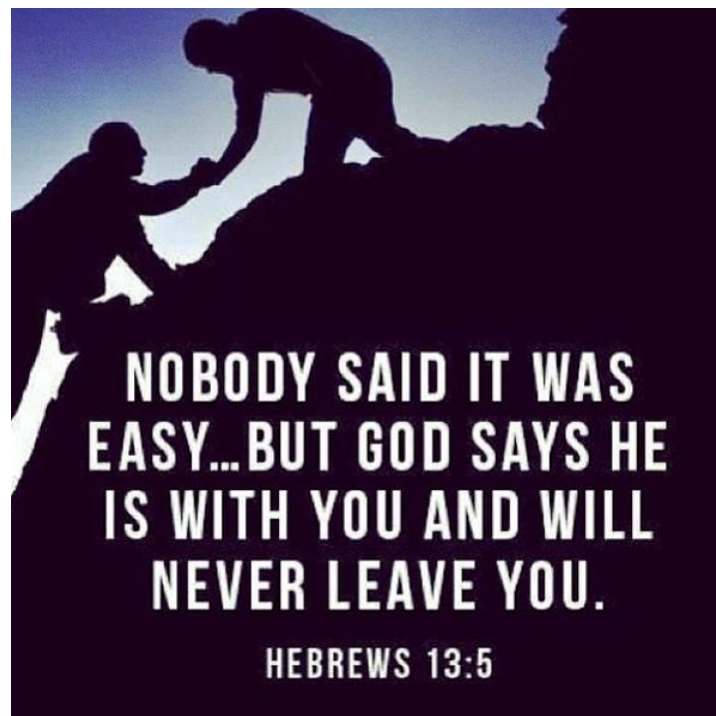
In the end, Jesus felt God’s abandonment. It brings peace to me knowing that Jesus had such feelings; therefore, I know He understands mine. God has made a promise to us that through the Holy Spirit, we shall never be alone again. By our faith, we are saved from the torment of going through life without God. Yes, we still have problems arise trying to cause us to stray from God, but we should remember His promises to us.

“I will never leave you or abandon you. Therefore, we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?” Hebrews 13:5-6

“As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Joshua 1:5b

Throughout Jesus’ life He always obeyed God, even though He didn’t know when His time would be up; He kept pursuing the Gospel. Through the hatred, joy, and persecution He followed God’s commands to be an example for us, and what better example could we have than Jesus! Even when we mess up and feel abandoned, God’s going to be right next to us, so there’s no need to worry for God is always with you!

Emma Towles



Saturday Morning, April 19, 2025

HE WILL SAVE US!

It was the summer of 1971. I was barely a teenager at 13 years of age. For just the second time in my life, I was attending church camp. Why? Because it was what you were supposed to do as a kid in BYF (Baptist Youth Fellowship) at First Baptist Church in Waukegan, Illinois. I was glad to be there because I was having a great time living in a cabin, making new friends, swimming in the lake, and singing around a campfire. From infancy, my parents had taken me to church faithfully every Sunday, so I had heard the Bible stories, learned life lessons on how to live according to God's laws, and was doing my best to be the best kid I could be.

But, during that week at camp, I began to realize something was missing. I heard for the first time from my cabin's counselor about having a "personal relationship with Jesus." At evening worship services I was in awe of the Christian band members (contemporary Christian music was in its infancy) who also gave powerful testimonies of how Jesus had "saved" them. The Gospel was preached, and I was confronted with the fact that because I was a sinner, I was unable to "save myself." The Holy Spirit was stirring something inside of me, and I realized for the first time that there was more to being a Christian than just following the rules. I saw it and felt it through the witness of my counselor, the band members, and even in a couple of my fellow campers.


During the last night of camp, sitting around the campfire singing "Pass It On," I began to cry. Where was this emotion coming from? What was I feeling? Why couldn't I control this? My counselor took me aside and while I do not remember the details of the conversation, her wise words led me to understand the truth that, despite all my efforts to be good, I was a sinner in need of grace. She led me through the sinner's prayer, and I asked Jesus to come into my heart and save me from my sin. I know in that moment Jesus did just that, and He did it for me personally.

Since that night I can look back at my life and see how He has saved me over and over again. He saved me from making the wrong choices time and time again through the years. He saved me to an abundant life full of the richness of knowing Him and walking with Him through joys and sorrows, storms and calm waters, and fearful days that He turns into days of "peace that passes all understanding." He saved me, is saving me, and will save me. I am sure of it. All praise and glory to Him!

"I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, "who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty." Revelation 1:8

"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." Acts 4:12

Debbie Gorbandt

Jesus 
Salvation is found in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven
given to men by which we must be saved.
ACTS 4:12

Saturday Evening, April 19, 2025

LESSON LEARNED: WE ARE NOT ALONE

Matthew 27:62-65; Luke 23:56

No matter how sad, and indeed, the Saturday of Holy Week is tragically sad ... we are also aware of what will follow. While we have knowledge and empathy for those left behind that day, we have the gift of knowing about Sunday.

In Luke 23:55-56, we learn that, *“the women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.”*

Those women, the disciples, and all those who loved Jesus didn't have our comfort of knowing what was to come next. I imagine they spent the day thinking of their time with Jesus, perhaps even puzzling over and over in their heads the things Jesus said in their time together, especially that week that went from triumph to tragedy. Don't you imagine that images of the angry mob before Pilate, the beating and taunting, then seeing Jesus in agony on the cross, and the darkness – were images that would never leave their minds? It must have been the worse day of their lives. Things seemed hopeless.

Judas had betrayed Jesus and, in his shame, killed himself. Peter, as Jesus had predicted, denied he knew Jesus. I imagine Peter was beside himself with grief and guilt. The others, in addition to grief, may have been scared. What if that mob came after them? Despite personal fear, their grief must have been overwhelming as they mourned the death of a dear friend, a man as “close as a brother”. I imagine it was quiet as they hid out and worried someone would come after them. They knew what prophets had said, that Jesus was the Son of God. They might have even thought of Jesus telling them He'd rise again... but they watched Him die and placed Him in that tomb. Witnessing the death with the sky turning black, part of them had to have been convinced, if they weren't already, that He was the Son of God.

But the disciples, friends and family members weren't the only ones dwelling on Jesus' death that day. I think of Pilate, who gave multiple opportunities to release Jesus. If he wasn't convinced before, I think the time on the cross may have convinced him that Jesus is the Son of God. The religious leaders remembered Jesus calling them hypocrites and maybe they knew it was true. Even if the things that happened Friday convinced them that Jesus was right, they worried only about themselves.

In Matthew 27:62-65, we learn that *“the Pharisees went to Pilate, reminding him that Jesus said, “After three days I will rise again.” Even if they didn't think it would happen, they thought the disciples might take the body away and tell people Jesus had been raised from the dead. Pilate ordered that the tomb be secured and placed a guard outside to prevent any foul play.”*

When we are facing terrible moments, whether stress or sorrow, we have the comfort of Jesus, the One who suffered and died on the cross for us. Thank God, literally, that we are not alone in these times. Saturday of Holy Week is a reminder of this. When times seem to be at the darkest point, we don't know what tomorrow will bring. But we do know that whatever it is, Jesus is already there waiting for us.

Barbara Creasy



A lot can happen in 3 days

Easter Sunday Morning, April 20, 2025

HE IS RISEN!

These three words exude the dawn of the new day, the refreshing of my spirit that tells me that Jesus indeed, has saved me. Of course, as the radio personality used to say, I know “the rest of the story”. To the women who went to the tomb that morning to anoint Jesus’ body, it was a complete shock! They arrived at the tomb to find the stone had been rolled away. As Luke recounted in Chapter 24, when they entered, Jesus wasn’t there!

While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: ‘The Son of Man must be delivered over to the hands of sinners, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.’” Then they remembered his words. Luke 24:4-8

It is hard to comprehend just HOW bad the suffering of Jesus Christ was. Suffering for our benefit...to save us to eternal life:

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. Isaiah 53:5

“...but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness—for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead. He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.” Romans 4:24-25

Jesus was the ultimate sacrifice for our sins...yours and mine. His suffering and Resurrection paid for our sin...and opened the door to us for eternal life. He, and only He, will save us.

Matthew in Chapter 28 gives his account of how an angel came down and rolled the stone away. Did the angel roll it away to let Jesus out? No, He had already left. The angel rolled the stone away so that the women and later Simon Peter and John, could see the empty tomb.

Today, we have many stones that can block our view. Things that get in the way of our coming to Christ, or get in the way of having a closer relationship with Him. Actually, most of those stones have been put in the way by ourselves. We can ask God to help us “roll away the stone”...to help us keep our vision firmly on Jesus.

If you are reading this and haven’t met Jesus, it is my prayer that you will ask Him into your heart. If you know Jesus, it’s my prayer that this Easter season, you will strive to have a closer walk with Him.



HE WILL SAVE US!

Luke 24:25-27

While reading the Old Testament with our church family, I was reminded of the prophecies of the coming Messiah including the prophecies of the death of the Messiah.

- *“When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”* (II Samuel 7:12-13)
- Through the Scriptures they knew Jesus was coming so many years before His birth because God revealed this to them; then His death. *“Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”* (Isaiah 53:12)
- Then we read the fulfillment of these prophecies in the New Testament. *“He said to them, ‘How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah 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.”* (Luke 24:25-27)

Simply put, Jesus was crucified to save us from our sins so we can die to live eternally like He does in Heaven. If you love Jesus, the story of His death is almost unbearable to hear; He was so cruelly abused by those who hated or were just plain jealous of Him. How could we possibly live through life’s heartaches without faith in Jesus and His comfort? The loss of a loved one, heartache for a hurting child, illness, grief for a dear friend. The Holy Spirit is there to comfort us, guide us, and protect us through life. For Christians, Easter represents Jesus Christ’s victory over death. His Resurrection is proof He is the Son of God, and it is the reason we can find hope in an eternity spent with Him. During Easter, Christians celebrate what we believe to be the biggest moment in history.

Dear Lord, I want to let Your Truth sink deep down into my heart and soul today. Help me stay focused on You. I pray for the many who will understand for the first time this Easter Sunday that You are the Risen Savior. Wash over every soul with fresh hope and overwhelming joy because **“He Will Save Us!”**

In Christ,
Sharon Thompson





Happy Easter