



Passion Week

Devotionals

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Saturday: Almost There

When I read the Bible I like to insert myself in the story. I encourage you to do the same. Both of us can expect the Spirit to speak and to illumine our way...our way to Jerusalem with Jesus...his cross and the empty tomb...for to this day, they both mean abundant life to us.

Mark 10:32-34. "And they were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them. And they were amazed and those who followed were afraid. And taking the twelve again, he began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man is going to be delivered over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death and deliver him over to the Gentiles. And they will mock him and spit on him, and flog him and kill him. And after three days he will rise."

Jesus walked ahead of the original disciples toward Jerusalem. His friends were amazed at him. There were some following behind the twelve who were afraid, but apparently the faith of the ones in front encouraged them to follow on. Oh friends, may the Lord keep us steady in our Christian life...going on with Him no matter what. There just might be one behind us that is afraid and in need of a living illustration of faith to follow.

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The disciples had already been told twice that suffering and death lay ahead for their Lord. And they watched their master walk toward it with determination and fearlessness...walking tall and strong toward the mocking, the spitting, the flogging, the crucifixion, and finally the resurrection. Would I have been so amazed at his courage and his faith in his Father's plan of redemption? Oh I hope so. I am amazed today at how he leads me by his Spirit... imparting his own strength and faith into my heart for whatever comes my way.

Here Jesus foretells his death and resurrection for a third time in Mark's gospel. This repetition started two weeks before in Caesarea Phillipi. The context there helps us to know why repeating the story was and is so important.

Jesus asked his disciples, "Who do men say that I am?" And they told him John the Baptist...Elijah...one of the prophets." And then he asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." It seems to me that Jesus was not near as interested in the popular vote as he was in making sure that his closest followers understood just who he was and what he had been sent to do.



Jesus knew that his friends would need to anchor their faith in him as he truly was...God very God who came to save them from their sins and give them eternal life, both now and forever...for the days to come were going to be hard. And friends in the faith, Jesus knows that like Peter, we too can say Jesus is Lord one day...and then when things get hard, doubt and denial attack our hearts. That is why we must take this trip to Jerusalem together...and often...to remind us of just how faithful Jesus is and just how amazing life with him can be.

“Father, the gospel story is indeed an old, old story. But it is still as powerful as You are...powerful unto salvation... powerful unto sanctification, and our final glorification in heaven. Now guide us through the Son’s story this week... the story of redemption that took place on a road, in the home of friends, in the city of David, in the temple, in an upper room, on an olive mountain, before religious and government judges, on a cross on a hill just outside the city gates...all the way to the empty tomb. Thanks Father....Love you...and thanks for loving us so much. In Jesus’ Name...



Sunday: the King Arrives

John 12:12-13 “The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.”

Jesus and his disciples reached Bethany on Saturday. They stayed with Lazarus and his sisters, Martha and Mary. That evening after dinner Mary came with an alabaster vial of perfume and poured it on the feet of Jesus. And she wiped his feet with her hair. It was an extravagant gift of love and devotion toward her Savior/Messiah...12 ounces of pure nard valued by Judas at 90 pieces of silver...more than a workers wages for a whole year. Judas would rebuke the young woman. He called her expression of love a waste of benevolent resources which could have been given to the poor. Jesus then rebuked Judas. He told the errant follower to leave her alone. He then honored Mary by saying that her anointing of his body with perfume was preparation for his burial and that people would remember her devotion for generations of the faithful to come.



Wow...We see the loving alertness of Jesus toward a young convert and good friend. Certainly Jesus would have been preoccupied with conflicting thoughts of being the eternal passover lamb sacrificed in just a few days. But that did not keep him from noticing Mary and praising her humble declaration of love for him. Jesus was always discipling his chosen. This is the love of God for us, brethren...an always alert Savior and intercessor for us. "Jesus, you are always better and by your grace, we are still following your lead.

Now it is the next day...it's Sunday...6 days before Passover...and Jesus left Bethany and headed toward Jerusalem. A large crowd of people who had come to the Feast heard that Jesus was coming into the city. They took their cloaks and laid them in the road so that Jesus could ride his donkey colt over them (Mark 11:8).

The Old Testament speaks to this particular celebration activity. The 7th King of Israel was Ahab...perhaps the most wicked king in Israel's history. When God had enough of Ahab and his evil queen Jezebel, He sent Elisha's disciple to the residence of Israel's commanding military general, Jehu, with a message. God was choosing him to succeed Ahab on the throne of Israel. The scripture (2Kings 9:13) tells of how those around Jehu took their coats off and laid them on the steps of his home, blew the trumpets and shouted, "Jehu is King."

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Multitudes of people in Jerusalem, knowing the Jehu story, would wave palm branches as Jesus rode through the eastern gate of Jerusalem on and over their coats. And they waved those palm branches as a symbol of hope that the Messiah had indeed come. And others would shout, "Save us now...Jesus the King." Oh brethren, may our lives express such exuberance in worshiping King Jesus today.

There is one more thing of great importance that we read about in connection with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Mark 11:11..."And Jesus entered Jerusalem and went into the temple. And when he looked around at everything, he left and went back to Bethany..."

The palm Sunday destination was not just the city of David. It was the Temple of God. I believe that Jesus' discipling message that hour could have been what we read about him in heaven in Rev. 21:22. "And I saw no temple in the city, for the temple is the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." Jesus was saying I am better than the temple. I don't just house God once a year. I am God everyday. And I welcome you to come to me all the time.



I believe that Jesus most likely went to the place on the temple mount where the bronze altar stood. Jesus and his disciples knew that on Friday the passover lamb would be sacrificed at 3 in the afternoon. Now we read in 1 Cor. 5:7 "For Christ, our passover lamb, has been sacrificed". Jesus would disciple his friends one more time with a visual aid nearby...possibly saying, "like my cousin John said, "I am the lamb that taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29).

" Praise you, Jesus, for your palm Sunday destination. Oh how the Spirit has used your discipling in the temple that day to help us grasp just how far back the gospel was preached to prepare a people to believe in and to bear witness to the Messiah. Help our faith in you to grow stronger so that we may boldly bear witness to you going forward in the days to come. Praise Your Name...



Monday: a Fig Tree and a House Cleaning

Mark 11:12 “On the following day, when they came from Bethany, Jesus was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, “May no one ever eat fruit from you again.” And his disciples heard it.”

Jesus disciplined his followers on the way back to the holy city. His class room was on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem. The visual aid this time was a fig tree growing just off the road on public land. What got the attention of Jesus and his band of followers was the leafiness of the fig tree. Everyone in this group would have known that fruit on that tree grew with the leaves and not after them. They would have also known that fruit bearing for this tree normally was at least a month away. But the leaves were promising figs.

Jesus and his friends found nothing but leaves on this tree that morning. The tree was acting like a hypocrite. The tree was pretending at best to have fruit for the patrons passing by. The tree was proclaiming and promising fruit, only to prove barren and fruitless. Jesus cursed it to fruitlessness...to be useful to no one.



Jesus spoke that day as he spoke through Jeremiah so many years before. "When I would gather them saith the Lord, there are no grapes on the vine; there are no figs on the fig trees...my joy is gone and grief is upon me...my heart is sick within me..." (Jeremiah 8:13,18). And why the drama on this day of Passion week? Because the nation of Israel, with their temple and priests and their festivals and sacrifices, were promising a salvation that they could not deliver. They were spiritual hypocrites...acting spiritual on the outside but filled with dead men's bones on the inside...completely barren without spiritual life and fruitfulness. Just hours after this event of Jesus judging the fig tree, and prophesying the judgment of God upon the religious system in Israel, Jesus would clear the temple of the money changers and the festival profiteers taking advantage of true worshipers of the Lord God. He would clear the court of the Gentiles, reminding the Jewish workers and worshipers that God through Solomon put that court there as an invitation to Gentiles to come and seek the One who wants to save them too. The religious leaders had obviously forgotten that detail concerning the Kingdom of God's outreach to a world of people as well as to the Jews.



And the chief priests and the scribes heard Jesus' teachings that day and sought a way to destroy him. For they feared him, because many were astonished at his teaching. And when evening came, Jesus and his band of followers left the city and made their way back to Bethany for the night.

I wonder if there was one of the twelve who walked quietly those two miles back to Bethany that night. Could he have been thinking to himself? Perhaps he wondered about the message of the barren fig tree that his rabbi spoke of that morning? Maybe he said, "I don't want to be a spiritual pretender with no real substance. I don't want to be a hypocrite who says one thing and lives another. I don't want to be that stumbling block to others who are seeking the true Savior. I want my devotion to Jesus to bear spiritual fruit that would nourish and refresh everyone around me." That quiet walk walk could have been made by you and me.



“Holy Spirit, thanks for giving us one more amazing glimpse of the life and work of Jesus that final week of his ministry on earth before the cross. He truly was the courageous Lion of Judah protecting his people unto salvation and sanctification and ultimately unto glory in the Kingdom of God.” Jesus is better.



Tuesday: A Challenge Met

For a third time this week Jesus and his disciples left the little village of Bethany and went back into the city of Jerusalem, in particular, into the temple.

Mark 11:27-33 “And they came again into Jerusalem. And as Jesus was walking in the temple, the chief priests and the scribes and the elders came to him. And they said to him, “By what authority are you doing these things?” Jesus said to them, “Was the baptism of John from heaven or from man? Answer me.” And the temple authorities discussed the question with one another. “If we say from heaven, then he will say why didn’t we believe John. If we say from man, then the people will rise up and claim John was indeed a prophet from God. So they answered Jesus saying that they did not know.”

Oh the arrogance of the temple authorities. They had heard of many of the miraculous things that Jesus had done over the last three years in Judea and Galilee and Syria. They had also heard of the great crowds of people who were gathering to hear him teach about the Kingdom of God. Some of these religious leaders had seen with their own eyes the power of God in and through Jesus the Nazarene. (John 3:1,2 “Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus, who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.



He came to Jesus at night and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with you.”) Nicodemus and other colleagues among the Pharisees knew what Jesus had done and they said among themselves that he very well could be from God. Yet they would not believe what Jesus said about himself, that he was the Messiah.

John 4:25,26 “The woman at the well of Samaria said to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming. When he comes he will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her, “I (who speak to you) am he.” And the woman left her water jar and went into the town telling everyone what Jesus told her. And many went out to hear for themselves and became believers in Jesus the Messiah too. The Samaritans believed Jesus. But the religious leaders in Jerusalem would not.

That Tuesday morning, Jesus met their unbelieving challenge to him in the presence of his disciples as well as hundreds more who were walking through Solomon’s portico on the temple mount at that time...another discipling moment. Being the rabbi that he was, Jesus answered their question with a question. “Was John’s ministry from heaven or was it from man?”



The temple authorities who came to trap Jesus in his answer, found themselves trapped in their's. If they said that John was from heaven they would be saying, that by the works of Jesus, he would be from heaven too. And if they said that John's ministry was from man, the multitudes of people within ear shot would eagerly and emotionally claim John a prophet from heaven. And that would only lead to the conversation that John had with so many that Jesus was the lamb of God come to take away the sin of his people. And they didn't want to go there. So the religious leaders refused to answer Jesus' questions. Jesus's authority came from heaven. Because he was from heaven. He was the Messiah. He was God the Son who came from heaven to earth to save his people from their sins.

"Lord, you've disciplined us again as we walked with you in the temple today through the reading of the gospel. Moses stood with his people one day in Egypt. That was courageous. The next day he ran for his life into the wilderness of Midian. Today we watched you stand against those who were out to discredit you and your ministry of the good news of the Kingdom. You didn't run. You shared the truth and trusted the Father with the outcome. Help us do the same, dear Savior. Thank you and we love you."



Wednesday: Silent

Wednesday, before the passover observance on Thursday, was a very busy day for Jews in and around Jerusalem. The city and surrounding villages would have been extremely crowded with a million visitors there for the celebration. Preparing for the passover meal was priority one. This would include planning, shopping, and cooking.

So what did Jesus do on Wednesday of that first passion week? The Bible is strangely quiet about the activity of Christ that Wednesday. Some theologians believe that Wednesday was the day that Judas made his way to the temple and negotiated a betrayal of Jesus into the hands of the Sanhedrin. "Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him 30 pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him." Matthew 26:14-16. Janet Denison, of Foundations Ministries, asked the question, "What did Jesus do while his life was being sold for the amount commonly associated with the purchase price of a slave." Again, it seems that the scriptures are silent on Christ's words and thoughts during that Wednesday.

Would Jesus have found a quiet place in Bethany to pray that Wednesday before passover? I remember Mark 1:35.



“And in the morning, a great while before day, Jesus arose and went out to a lonely place, and there he prayed.” And I remember what he did after the feeding of the 5000 as recoded in Mark 6:46 “And after he sent his disciples to the other side, he went up on the mountain to pray.” And do you remember what Jesus was doing right before the choosing of the twelve? Luke 6:12 “In these days Jesus went out to the mountain to pray...” Yes, I could believe that Jesus found a quiet place to pray and rest up before the coming events of Thursday.

As a bit of an aside, if that was indeed what Jesus did, what if he had invited you and me to go with him to that lonely place to pray. Would we have seen him on his knees? Would he have laid prostrate on the ground? Would he have sat on a small boulder at the foot of the mountain outside Bethany with a bowed head? Would he have spoken to the Father out loud or in a whisper or just quietly from his heart to the Father’s heart? I wonder.

“Father, the reason for a silent Wednesday during Passion week is entirely with you. We are good with that. Love you, in your son’s great name we pray...amen.”



Thursday: Don't Forget Me

On Thursday morning, Jesus sent two disciples into Jerusalem. They would locate the room which the Lord had beforehand secured. They would be going into the city for another reason too. On behalf of Jesus and the rest of the twelve, they would be taking a lamb to the temple as a passover offering of worship to God. Only two people were allowed to accompany the lamb to the sacrifice. I wonder if it was Peter and John. The lamb would be slaughtered and some of its blood sprinkled on the altar. Then the dead lamb would be taken home and roasted whole and eaten in the evening meal with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, crushed fruit, and wine. The two disciples took that responsibility to serve the rest. All the meal would have special relationship to the night in Egypt when God saved Israel from the angel of death that was destroying the first born children throughout the land, but would passover the Jewish families whose homes were applied with the blood of a lamb. That meal would be important. But what Jesus did after that meal on Thursday was to institute another supper that would have far greater significance.

“And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the passover lambs, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?”



And he sent two of his disciples and said unto them, "Go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. And wherever he enters say to the master of the house, "The Teacher says, "Where is my guest room where I may eat the passover with my disciples?" And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready... there make preparations for us."...And when it was evening he came with the twelve to eat the passover meal...and that would be good.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take, this is my body. And then he took a cup. And after giving thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many." Mark 14:12-24..."Do this in remembrance of Me....don't forget me and what I am about to do." Luke 23:19

Thousands of lambs and goats were sacrificed during the week of passover, but not all of them combined would take away a single sin from the whole nation of Israel. Oh how different was Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, "the" lamb of God that "took away" the sins of his people.

Let's listen to the writer of Hebrews on this matter.



“For since the law has but a “shadow of good things to come” and not the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin. And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God waiting from that time until his enemies be made a footstool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified. Hebrews 10:1-14.

The last Sunday of every month Alamo Ranch Community Church gathers to partake of the Lord’s Supper together. We worship as we remember what Jesus did for us on the cross. He saved us from our sins. He secured a salvation for us that could never be overturned. And He adopted us into his Forever Family. How awesome and great is our God/Savior Jesus Christ. “Praise Your Name, Lord! Praise Your Name!!!



Friday: It is Finished

Mark 14:61 “Jesus remained silent and made no answer. Again the High Priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

It was Friday morning around 6:oclock. Jesus had been betrayed the night before by Judas with a kiss into the hands of the Sanhedrin. By now Judas had hung himself out of remorse and Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times. Up to this time Jesus had remained silent to the questions and accusations put toward him. But then the High Priest asked Jesus again, “Are you the Christ, the Son of God?” And Jesus said, “I am.”

Jesus, with all clarity, said out loud to all the Jewish religious leaders there that He was the Messiah (the Christ), the Son of God (the Blessed), the I Am (everything you need for salvation), the messianic prophesied Son of Man (who would come with clouds of heaven...with authority, glory, and sovereign power; and all peoples of every nation and every language will worship him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will never pass away. And His kingdom will never be destroyed. Daniel 7:13-14)



Friends, do you remember when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush in the wilderness of Midian? He told Moses to go back to Egypt and tell the Israelites that He was on the way to deliver them from their bondage. Moses told God that he didn't think that plan would work. They are going to ask me who gave me such a message. What do I tell them? He said, "Tell them I Am sent you." Jesus was saying to the Sanhedrin counsel, I am the God of the burning bush...I am the God who parted the Red Sea...I am the God who met Moses on Sinai with the perfect law...I am the God of heaven that created everything...I am the God of this temple...I am the God of this nation and the One true God of every nation in the world.

Wow...And the High Priest tore his garments and declared Jesus guilty of blasphemy, deserving of death. So the judging council took Jesus to Pilate, the Roman Governor of Judea. They wanted Jesus dead. And they knew that it was unlawful under Rome for them to execute the death penalty. They would have to get Rome in on it.

Pilate spoke with Jesus and came back to the council of Jewish leaders. He told them, "I find no fault in him... certainly nothing worthy of death." And Pilate addressed the Sanhedrin and the large crowd around them.



He said, "I've given you a murderer, Barabas, per my mercy shown every year at this time. Now what do you want me to do with this man? I don't find any guilt in him." And they cried out, "Crucify him...crucify him!" So Pilate had Jesus scourged. Pilate had Roman guards flog Jesus, peeling ribbons of flesh from Christ's body with their whips, just short of killing him. And still the crowd cried out, "Crucify him." So wanting to please the crowd, Pilate gave the innocent Jesus over to the Roman guards to crucify him.

They pushed a crown of sharp thorns into his head and mocked him as the king of the Jews. The guards placed the heavy Roman cross on his bloodied back and shoulders and forced him to carry it to Golgatha's hill of crucifixion. People along the way mocked and spit at Jesus, saying terrible things about him. Upon arriving to the place of execution, the guards nailed the Son of God to that cross, hands and feet. Then they dropped that cross into the hole and tortured the Son of Man even more as the nails ripped flesh and tendons with the sudden stop at the bottom of the hole. It would not be a quick death, but as Josephus said in his writings around 70 AD, crucifixion would be a most wretched death...hours and even days of intense suffering. Rome called it the "supreme penalty".



Charles Spurgeon reminded his congregation in London, in 1861, of just how the Lord Jesus suffered that supreme penalty on Good Friday of passion week: "The sun scorched him. The Savior's open wounds pressed hard against the rough wood of the cross beam. That caused the fever in his body to increase ever more. Incredible agony from limbs out of joint to dehydration, a slow suffocation, and eventually heart failure racked his body and mind. Could the suffering get any worse for Jesus? Yes. God forsook him...God forsook His Son. Hear the cry of Jesus: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Even heaven failed him as darkness veiled the sun from noon to three. Earth forsook him, for his disciples forsook him and fled. He looks everywhere and there is none to help. He treads the winepress alone. On and on he goes, steadily determined to drink the last dreg of that cup which must not pass from him if the will of the Father is to be done. At last he cried, "It is finished." And he gave up his spirit." (John 19:30.)

What might Jesus have meant by those words, "It is finished?" I believe we get the answer from Jesus' High Priestly prayer in the garden.

John 17:1-4. "Father, the hour has come...glorify Your Son that I may glorify You. For I have accomplished the work that You gave me to do."



“It is finished”...the work of redemption was brought to completion at the cross of Christ. The work of saving his elected family from their sins was done. And don't forget, no one took his life from him. He voluntarily and willingly 'gave up his life' (his spirit) so that we who were dead in our sins could live forever with him in glory. “What a salvation... bought and paid for in full by Jesus...for you and me and the millions of people down through the ages that make up the chosen ones. Hallelujah!



Saturday: Sunday's Coming

"Then the women who followed Jesus saw the tomb where Jesus was laid. Then they returned (to Bethany) to prepare spices and ointments. The next day, on the Sabbath, they rested according to the commandment." Luke 23:55,56

To these followers of Jesus, Sunday was coming. According to scripture, they knew that they could do no work on the Sabbath, so they worked on Friday after the crucifixion of their Lord. They worked to make ointments to anoint the body of Jesus as an act of love and honor for him. Yes, these women were getting ready for Sunday.

"Sir we remember how that imposter (Jesus) said while he was still alive, "After three days I will rise." Therefore order the tomb to be made secure."

These scribes and priests who appealed to Pilate to set guards before the tomb of Jesus also knew that Sunday was coming. The women were making preparations for that day. And as we can see from the above passage, the religious leaders in Jerusalem were making their own preparations for Sunday.



The Saturday between Friday and Sunday found Jesus in the borrowed tomb. Nothing is explicitly recorded of what the disciples were doing and feeling on Saturday after the crucifixion and burial of Jesus. However, I think that the record in Luke 24 helps us to get somewhat of a picture of the disciples' demeanor. We read where Cleopas and another follower of Christ had "downcast faces" as they walked home on Sunday discussing with an unknown traveler the events on Friday. As of yet they had not made the connection between the empty tomb and the resurrection of the Messiah. Certainly, Saturday must have been, for the most part, a sorrowful time for the apostles and the rest of the followers of Christ. If they did remember the words of their master concerning his resurrection, those thoughts were not written down. But praise God, Sunday was coming. And their faith may have been little for a couple of days, but they were about to be lifted up and restored in their spirits for sure.



Sunday: The Empty Tomb

“When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, so that they might go and anoint him. And very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb. And they were saying to one another, “Who will roll the stone away for us from the entrance of the tomb?” And looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled back...it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go and tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.” Mark 16:1-7.

Luke’s gospel included Joanna and some other women with Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome at the tomb of Christ that Sunday morning. As an act of love, they all wanted to do for Jesus what they would have done for one of their own loved ones. Now the fact that they were at the tomb to anoint his dead body says that they did not expect to find Jesus gone. And if the other disciples had truly believed Jesus’ words about his resurrection wouldn’t they have been at the tomb early that morning to see their master rise from the dead?



I would have thought so. But after three years with Jesus, the disciples still struggled in their faith. (And after fifty years with Jesus I still struggle in mine.) But guess what. Jesus showed himself to his friends ten times during the forty days between his resurrection and his ascension to heaven to encourage them. And praise the Lord...He is still doing that for us to this very day.

The Apostle Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, made the gospel message very clear. "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures." (1 Cor. 15). Paul knew that the gospel included the resurrection of Jesus to be sure.

God the Father accepted the finished work of Christ on the cross. His raising the Son from the dead proved it. There wasn't anything else that had to be accomplished to save us from our sins. That is why Paul exhorted young Timothy to always remember that Jesus was raised from the dead according to the gospel (2 Tim. 2:8).



Charles Haddon Spurgeon amended Paul's conviction. He preached to his church family at the Met in London, England: "The Lord is risen indeed" is the sum and substance of our witness when we speak of our risen Redeemer. For if we but know the truth of this resurrection, and feel its power, our mode of utterance is of secondary importance. For the Holy Spirit will bear witness to the truth and cause it to produce fruit in the minds of the hearers."

Oh fellow followers of Jesus, let us believe and feel the power of the truth of Christ's resurrection one more time this Easter Sunday. Because He is risen, our faith is real and our prayers are heard all the way to heaven. Because He is risen, our sins are forgiven once and for all. Because He is risen, our loved ones in Christ who have fallen asleep have not perished. Because He is risen, we have hope in this life and the life to come. As the song writer put it, "God's not dead, He's truly alive." Praise His Name. His name is Jesus. And He is better. But He is also the only Savior for our souls. And by grace and faith we worship Him.

