

# Savior

THE GOSPEL OF JOHN



## THE SAVIOR, JESUS

John has written everything including and up to these last chapters of his Gospel for the express purpose “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31). To that end, he has recounted Jesus’ miraculous works and detailed his revelatory words. The signs Jesus performed unveil power that could only belong to God, transforming materials from their natural state, multiplying matter, healing the infirmed, undoing the tragic effects of the fallen created order, and finally reviving his dear friend Lazarus from the dead. Furthermore, his sayings disclose the mysteries of God’s will and his own identity which is one with the eternal God of Israel, the great “I Am”, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (7:48-58). But for the first-time reader, these later chapters of John’s Gospel subsequently call all that Jesus has said and done into question.

From the second chapter, Jesus has been at odds with the religious establishment of Jerusalem. After Jesus publicly rebuked and corrected the disruptive and desecrating business practices within the temple court (2:13-17), the Jewish leaders have publicly interrogated, denounced, and even threatened him. They accuse him of breaking the Jewish customs regarding the Sabbath (5:16), reject his claims that he is one with God the Father (5:18), question his teaching (6:41-59), try to arrest him (7:32), plot ways to kill him (5:18; 7:1; 11:45-50), threaten his friends (12:9-11) and attempt to take his life (8:59; 10:31). However, Jesus continues to win favor with the people of Jerusalem and Galilee and repeatedly eludes their attempts to arrest and assassinate him; that is, until one of Jesus’ closest disciples hands him over into the hands of the high priest and the Pharisees.

As Jesus partakes of the Passover meal with his twelve disciples and closest friends, one of the Twelve, Judas Iscariot, leaves suddenly, enacting a betrayal like none other. And though he knows what is happening, Jesus continues to reveal the nature of his Messiahship, just what kind of Christ and what kind of Savior he is and will be. He helps them to understand that it is only through him that anyone can know the Father and experience life-giving communion with him (14:6-7), promises that they will experience the same benefits of God's Son in their own prayers (14:12-14), and foretells of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the benefits his power and presence will impart (14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:7-15). But he also shares with them several sobering reminders. He has hinted before that he would have to experience pain and loss. After all, he is the Good Shepherd, and the Good Shepherd "lays down his life for the sheep" (10:11). Jesus also declared, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (12:23). And even now, Jesus warns his disciples that the world despises him, for on its own it neither knows God nor recognizes Jesus as his Son (15:18-21). Jesus will lay down his life for his friends (15:13), and when he does, his disciples "will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice" (16:22).

But what does this mean for the things that Jesus has said? He has promised so many great things for those who love, believe, and follow him. How can he deliver on those promises if he is dead? Even more, why would he subject himself to these powers if he has power like none other than God himself, power that even holds sway over life and death?

Jesus' words underscore why he will endure this suffering. For although he might be at the mercy of "the ruler of this world" and the sinful forces under his influence, "he has no claim" on Jesus (14:29-30). Instead, Jesus does what his Father wills (6:38). He lays down his life freely, because he loves his Father and he loves those whom he is drawing to himself (14:30; 15:13). Furthermore, he does it not under coercion, but under his own absolute freedom and personal authority. It is by his own accord that Jesus freely lays down his

life, obeys the Father's will (8:28), and becomes the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. For this man, God's servant will be marred, despised, and rejected, made to bear undeserved grief, sorrow, and shame (Isaiah 52:14; 53:3). By his own people he will not be honored as God or King, and they will hand him over to oppression and affliction (53:4, 7). But all will transpire according to the will of the Lord, so that "the iniquity of us all" might be laid on Jesus; so that he might bear our griefs and carry our sorrows; so that he might make an offering for guilt and account righteous the sinful people of God; so that he might not just sprinkle the Jews with his sanctifying blood but many nations (Isaiah 52:15-53:10). Though men might look to him and long to hide their faces, God has ordained that his Servant and Son will be "lifted up," hoisted upon a Roman cross so that the consequences of our sin and the injustice of our rebellion might be put on display (8:28; Isaiah 52:13). When he is lifted up, he will draw all people to himself (12:32), for they will behold the love of God in the offering of the Father and the obedience of the Son. And all who look on the Son and believe in him will have eternal life (6:40).

In his final words, Jesus says to his disciples that although they will weep and be sorrowful, their "sorrow will turn into joy," which no one can take from them (16:20, 22). But where is the assurance? There is one sign which Jesus promised that has yet to be performed. At the beginning of his ministry, at the outset of his conflict with those who would hand him over to death, the Jewish leaders asked Jesus for a sign that would legitimize everything he said. In response, Jesus declared in the temple court, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (2:19). As he had told his disciples, he had the authority to lay down his life and to take it up again (10:17-18). And true to his word, he does. On the third day after his death, he rose again.

The final sign was performed. All of his teachings, commands, revelations, and promises were underscored in that one act. By breaking the persistent reality of human death, God put on display his power to save, allowing all to see that the offer of forgiveness, salvation,

and life in Jesus was trustworthy and true. By pioneering the road out of death, Jesus demonstrated that he truly was the promised Messiah and Son of God. Therefore, his disciples can count on the fact that because Jesus lives, they will also (14:19). They can be assured of their own resurrection and eternal life with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (11:25-26; 14:3). Therefore, the disciples and all of Jesus' followers for all time can take heart, for he has overcome the world (16:32-22).

The same Word who created all things finally began the process to redeem and restore them. Where the cosmos had been marred by the realities of sin and death, now "grace and truth had come through Jesus Christ" (1:17). Until that point, time had advanced in centuries and millennia, but cosmic eras had changed over just a few days, so that eternity found open a world without end.

## ABOUT THE ART

*"I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out."*

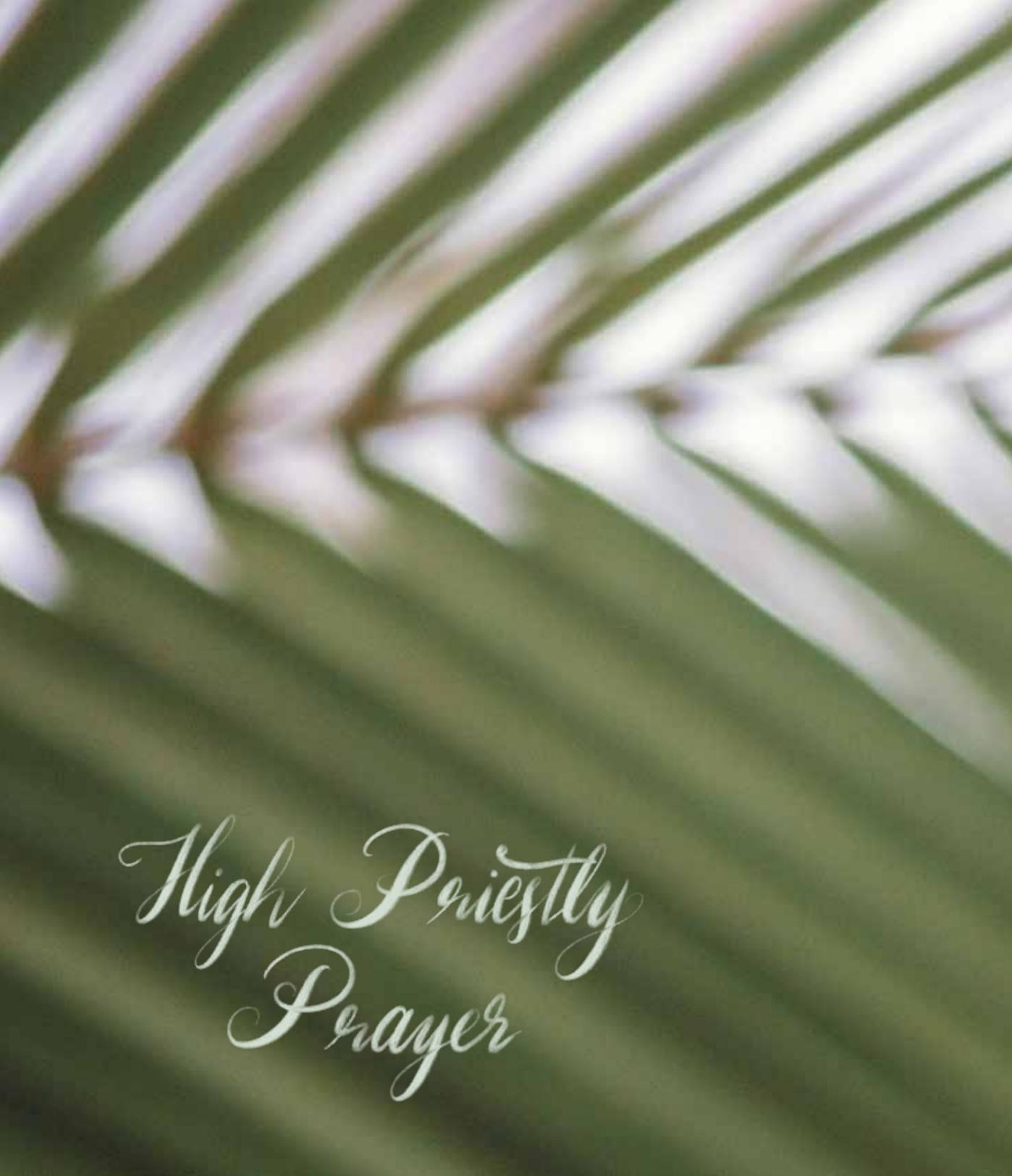
Creation magnifies its Creator.

Through the progression of Holy Week, creation reverberates the story of Christ. Palms and thorns become characters themselves.

Christ is recognized as the One True King who reigns.  
Christ is recognized as the Pascal Lamb who bled.

Creation displays God's majesty, beauty, and sovereignty.  
It shouts his praises. It glorifies his name.

*Christ died; it was finished; the ground quaked.  
The stones cried out.*



## JOHN 17:1-5

Immediately preceding this prayer is a heartfelt and sincere discussion among Jesus and the disciples. Our Savior explains that his time has come, he is not alone as God is with him, and in this world they will have tribulation - but he has overcome the world (16:32-33).

Then, he turns his eyes toward Heaven and prays with all the disciples present. Jesus knows the time is quickly approaching where he will have to suffer greatly for the sins of the entire world. Could you imagine knowing that you are about to be beaten and hung to death on a cross? Our flesh would be desperately trying to find any way out. Jesus fully understands the burden, but also completely comprehends his role in the bigger picture - his role in the Kingdom.

How did our Savior respond to the suffering on the horizon? He prayed this to our Father, "I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (17:4-5).

There are many things we can learn from this prayer that can help us in times of trial,

*High Priestly  
Prayer*

## JOHN 17:6-19

while reminding us of the character of God. In our Savior's prayer, the word used to describe God is "Abba," the Aramaic word meaning "father." Jesus was not calling out to a mystical power in the clouds; he was praying to his daddy. This communion and intimacy with the Maker of the universe is undeniable - and is how we should approach our Heavenly Father.

When in the middle of suffering - or when trials are on the horizon - we must have an established relationship with our God that allows us to call out in comfort and confidence, "Father." Although we can grow in greater understanding of our Lord and Savior amidst suffering, it is best if we already have that connection and intimacy established before we enter into difficult seasons.

Jesus also understood that his story in the bigger picture meant a gruesome death upon the cross, but it was a part of the story that only he could play. Our loving Savior greatly suffered in human form as the ultimate sacrifice for the sins of the world - for our sins. Our failings, shortcomings, and inadequacies placed him on that cross. Why? Because God loves us - it's that simple. We have a God who loves us enough to send his Son to die on the cross as the ultimate sacrifice for our sins - so that we may be presented spotless.

What is your story - what role do you play in the bigger picture? When you face trials, tribulations, and temptations, do you turn to God and confidently proclaim "I trust you, Lord - help me to glorify you on earth" as Jesus modeled?

Our passage today highlights the importance of suffering well. Our Savior was facing literal death and his goal was to continue to glorify God, suffering well. Jesus was looking beyond the upcoming suffering to what was ahead - his future glory in God's presence.

This world is not our home. We will suffer as long as we are on earth. Praise the Lord that our time here is not the end of the story. Thanks to our amazing Savior and the love of God, we are able to look ahead to what is to come - remembering that Jesus has already overcome the world. In the meantime, we are called to suffer well, following the example of our Savior and drawing on his strength in our most difficult circumstances.

There's so much rich evidence of God's character in these few verses. The language in these 13 verses is so bold that I'm not even sure if I'm needed, but let us nevertheless turn our attention upon these words. Jesus came to show the name of God to those whom were given to him out of the world. Don't neglect this, Christian. Left to ourselves, we are not different from the sinner who does not know Christ Jesus. But, because we were meant for more, we have been freed from the shackles that constrain us to our definitive sinful nature from which there is no escape apart from Jesus

There's evidence here, that we serve a unified, triune, God. Just by being and coming to live in the world, what was God's became Jesus' (17:10). Thus, the believer belongs to Jesus because they belong to God. It is because of the person of Christ alone that we know that everything comes from God. Anything we have come to believe begins with the birth of Christ, not by any ability of our own (17:6-8).

Notice that Jesus' calling and our calling are different (17:9). Jesus came to intercede on behalf of those whom God called out of the world. I imagine Jesus, personally, knocking on my head asking me if I'm really paying attention, if I really understand what he is saying. Jesus is specifically, and purposefully, pleading with his Father for you and for me. Jesus' prayer for us is uniquely complex and so beautiful. He doesn't seek that we would be taken out of the world, but he pleads with the One who has all authority over the evil one to keep us from him. He serves as our guard. These aren't light words. If we took a minute to walk back through the lives of those men whom Jesus is praying over, we would see everything but perfect obedience. Nevertheless, we would see that they are walking secure in the freedom of Jesus. Jesus is confident of this because he is their guard, and there is nothing that can shatter his defense. On your worst or your best day, Jesus is your guard, and there is nothing that can shatter his defense.

But our calling and Jesus' calling differ. Jesus intercedes for the lives of those whose hearts are being renewed by the gospel. But he has commanded us to something else as well. According to this passage, Jesus pleads with God for those he divinely knows to be believers. But God has also sent us out into the world to proclaim the gospel to all those who may not yet believe so that he may continue to redeem, and

renew, souls to himself (17:18). Just as Jesus has pleaded for our souls, he has set us apart to plead for, and witness to, those who are lost, wandering without direction.

Lastly, Jesus has consecrated himself, like no leader ever did. Through his obedience, our Redeemer had the power to appoint himself to the office of King and Lord. And, he did this to mature us in the wisdom and understanding of knowing that Jesus was sent from God... and will be again.

## **JOHN 17:20-26**

Brother or sister in Christ, do you know that Jesus prays for you? Even now as you read these words, Christ, the one who upholds the universe by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:3), is interceding for YOU at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34). He is interceding on the basis of the perfect blood that he shed for you. But this text also reveals that on the other side of Calvary, Jesus still made petition to the Father on behalf of those who would believe in him through the word of his disciples (17:20).

Consider the scene: Jesus, in his divine omniscience, knows that he has just finished the last of many meals with his beloved disciples, that one of those disciples is about to betray him, and that because of this betrayal, he is imminently going to suffer torture, shame, and the full wrath of God poured out at the Cross. The night began with Jesus taking the form of a servant and washing clean his disciples' feet, and it would end the next morning with Jesus taking his place on the cross and washing clean his disciples' sinful hearts with his blood. Just as Christ is fully God, he is also fully man, and in his earthly life he was exposed to the full range of emotion and temptation that is a part of the human experience.

What motivated the Son of God to display such perfect humility and submission by lowering Himself to the place of deepest shame on the cross? What empowered the Son of Man to endure such an unimaginable degree of suffering despite the close-clinging fear and temptation to withdraw? The account that John gives in this passage reveals what was going on in the heart of the God-Man at the time. Read his prayer again.

Jesus asked for his followers to all be made "one." Just as he and the Father are united together in the Trinity, Jesus asked for his followers to be united together with God and with one another "so that the world may believe" that he is the Messiah (17:21). Christ did not ask for his followers to be united in their ethnic cultures, their political leanings, their social standings, or their personal preferences. These are all categories that create division and disunity in a fallen world. Through his work on the Cross, Christ made it possible for people of all different worldly categories to be made one (Ephesians 2:13-15). His work was motivated by his love (Ephesians 2:4-5), and that love made a way for his followers to be bound together in perfect unity with God and with each other despite all of their differences (Colossians 3:14). The future reality that people of all tribes, tongues, and nations will worship Christ together (Revelation 7:9) is the clear fulfillment of this. That should give us hope, but pull out your bible and keep reading to the end of the chapter. Why do they worship? What has brought them together? They have been washed clean in the blood of the Lamb, they will never hunger or thirst again because he is their shepherd, and he will shelter them in his presence forever (Revelation 7:14-17).

Christ asked for His followers to be united in him, and he wants them to see his glory (17:24).

We must be careful to discern the motivation of our hearts as we pursue unity. The diverse multitude of brothers and sisters who will be gathered around Christ's throne worshiping for eternity will not be gathered for unity's sake. They won't even be gathered for the sake of racial reconciliation. They will gather for the sake of the glory of Christ, because they have seen his glory, and it has forever changed them. Have you seen the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3)? As John Piper says, "The sun of God's glory was made to shine at the center of the solar system of our soul. And when it does, all the planets of our life are held in their proper orbit."

## JOHN 18:1-11

The Bible is a story that points to and from the events that take place in the final chapters of the gospel account written by Jesus' beloved disciple, John. As we read about the kings that rose and fell with God's people in the Old Testament, anticipation was created for a final messiah and king to come and reign forever as the prophets foretold. The beginning of John 18 gives a close look at the character of Christ the King as he knows what awaits him in the coming hours (18:4).

In 2 Samuel 15 we read about another king crossing the Brook Kidron like we see Jesus doing here in verse 1. King David had been warned by a messenger that his son, Absalom, had won the hearts of the people of Israel and was on his way to take over his father by the sword. He was told to flee, or else it would be too late for escape. This is such a stark contrast to what Jesus is doing in this betrayal account. Both of these men, David and Jesus, knew that death awaited them if either was to be given into the hands of their enemies. What we see, though, is that where David fled, Jesus continued on the path to Golgotha where he would ultimately be killed. Our savior knew that a cup had been given to him (18:11). This cup

*Betrayal, Arrest,  
& Trial*

was filled with the wrath of God that we, His people, rightly deserve. Praise the Lord that he did not flee in this most important time in history!

I do not think that the application of this passage is to say that we as Christians should follow the most physically dangerous path in our lives, although following Jesus could certainly lead us into dangerous places! Jesus had a specific purpose for doing this. It was to willingly lay down his life as a ransom for the people he loves. I think our response to meditating on who Christ is in this passage should be similar to the response of the people that Judas led to him when they learn of who he is. In verse 6 when they come face to face with who they have been seeking, “they drew back and fell to the ground.” These men were seeking to arrest Jesus, but when they see the “glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth,” (1:14) they cannot help but respond in reverence to Him.

The whole account of Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, and death is a weighty thing to think and read about. The weight only increases when you realize the love that Jesus had for his Father and for his people that would give him reason to willingly endure so much suffering. We must not overlook this fact. And to top it off, we do not deserve it! These soldiers and Judas could easily see their role in Jesus’ arrest and death. Until we understand the gospel, it is not easy for us to see the role we play. As an old theologian once said, “You contribute nothing to your salvation except the sin that made it necessary.” The only reason that it was necessary for Jesus not to flee in the face of death was the fact that his people needed an escape from death because of their (our) sin. The path to the cross was not an easy one, but it is one we can be thankful for. Because Jesus did not flee, death and sin do not have the final word for those in Christ. As we ponder the events leading to Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday, let us meditate on the compassion of Christ for His people.

## **JOHN 18:12-14, 19-24**

Have you ever passed a cop speeding? That pit starts to turn in your stomach. You think, “No way is this going to happen.” You pray one last hopeless prayer, but nonetheless the deed has been done. The cop car pulls out of the alley and flips on its lights after you. It’s like one

second everything was fine, but then out of nowhere everything was so dramatically and irreversibly ruined.

I imagine that a similar feeling of fearful, stomach-turning permanence might have overtaken Simon Peter as he swung his sword in his Savior’s defense. He watched his hero be bound and drug away. Standing by his word that he gave to Jesus just hours before in the Upper Room, he withdrew his weapon, ready to wage war, ready to give his life for his friend, all to be rebuked (13:37). Jesus didn’t need Simon Peter’s defense. To have another die on his behalf would be foolish, as he was to soon be killed for that same man.

In perfect submission, Jesus refused to fight the Father’s will. Instead he allowed those whom he granted the ability move to bind him, carrying him off with the very hands he once formed, being guided by the moonlight that he spoke into existence. Each piece of creation that he crafted began to turn on him, playing aid to his enemies. Nonetheless, he humbly sipped the cup prepared for him with every step he took.

Arriving at their final destination, the Messiah stood still before his accusers. Caiaphas had already decided the best option, but missed the magnitude of his own reason. He considered it good that Jesus die for the unity of the masses. He thought doing away with the one causing such strife in his community would bring peace to his people. It was in his best interest to get rid of the man responsible for all the unrest.

And he was right; by the murder of Jesus there would be peace. In his death, there would be unity. By his suffering all things would be made right, not due to his absence, but by his magnification. Caiaphas failed to understand that as the cross was lifted, Jesus was exalted with an exaltation that, though he be removed from that high place, would never again be taken away.

By this perfect submission and quiet surrender to the mockery and beatings and denial by his own people, he made salvation available to you and I. Jesus endured the wrath of God in order to extend the peace Caiaphas sought to a community bigger than the Jews, with an everlasting peace adequate to save any who seek.

Today, rest in the fact that this peace has been won for you. Believe that perfection has been achieved in Jesus' submission, rest in the fact that salvation is finished and give him the praise he is so worthy of in response.

## **JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27**

As morning breaks over the high priest's courtyard, Peter is warming his hands by a fire while Jesus stands trial within the surrounding walls. Peter has followed him here, watching closely as his friend, teacher, and Messiah is led away, betrayed by a man they all trusted. Everything has changed overnight, and Peter helplessly awaits news of what is to come.

But Jesus has already given Peter warning about what will happen next. It's possible he hears the flickering firelit whisper the previous words of Jesus, "Die for me? I tell you the truth, Peter — before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me" (13:38).

As Peter stands with the crowd in the courtyard, lingering yet attempting to go unnoticed, he enacts the truth behind the words: Jesus is not there to save him this time, and he's drowning. He is alone to walk the waves of judgment and scrutiny emanating from the eyes watching him, and the only hope he can see is to deny his own identity.

Three times, the answer is given: "No, I am not." "I am not one of his, I did not come here with him, I do not even know him..."

"...And immediately, a rooster crowed" (18:27).

John does not show Peter's reaction to the sound of the rooster's crows. The other gospel writers describe Peter remembering Jesus's prediction and weeping bitterly (Matthew 26:75, Mark 14:72, Luke 22:61-62). Luke portrays a poignant moment where Peter locks eyes with Jesus, the reality of his prophetic words sinking in as they gaze at one another. Here in John's gospel, there is no Jesus, no weeping, no running away in heartbreak. There is only the singular, echoing sound and the realization that Jesus knew.

Jesus knows Peter. He understands him. This is a difficult truth for Peter to confront, especially as the rooster acknowledges the light of dawn. Perhaps as the sun breaks over the horizon, it also dawns on Peter that Jesus really does know him, fully, and unlike Judas, who was labeled as the traitor, the Messiah who he denied called him a rock and kept him for his own.

This is the same reality we cling to as believers: He keeps us for his own. He knows us fully and sees us for who we truly are, traitors, deserters, deniers all. In our shame, we wish he didn't understand the messy, complicated, unattractive, cowardly parts of ourselves, but thankfully, he knows that's not really who we are.

There is redemption for Peter, as John shows us later. Jesus allowed him to falter, to recognize the flaws in his heart, but just as he once reached down to pull Peter from the ocean waves, he saved Peter again through his death and resurrection. Through his sacrifice, redemption is extended to you, too.

We are allowed to make mistakes. God understands our inward struggle to confess both who we are and who he is. But he still saves. He calls us his children and constantly reminds us that we belong to him. He provides grace in our failures, courage in our struggles, and love in our every breath. We are sons and daughters of a loving Father, and there is no denying that.

## **JOHN 18:28-40**

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself" (12:32). Yet in order to be lifted up, Jesus Christ had to be brought low. He had to empty himself, to take the form of a servant and humble himself by "becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:8). Christ is the exalted one, the one at whose name every knee will "bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess" that he is Lord (Philippians 2:10-11).

But before this triumph, this worship, this glory, and exaltation—Jesus Christ is the lowly one. We see his lowliness in the face of the sins revealed in this passage. First, the sin of the Jewish men is shown. Upon bringing Christ to Pilate's headquarters, the Jewish men escorting him

would not even enter. Why? “So that they would not be defiled, but could eat Passover” (18:28). As they lead Christ to his death sentence, they are principally concerned for their own cleanness, their own self-righteousness. As they walk the spotless lamb to an unjust slaughter, they only care about their outward righteousness. The sin continues once Jesus is before Pilate. Pilate, as the Roman governor, has complete authority to kill Christ but upon questioning him openly admits, “I find no guilt in him” (18:38). He questions Christ yet finds no guilt in him, not a single drop of sin from this Jewish King. But what does Pilate then do? He still allows Jesus to be handed over to the people—he permits him to die. This is Pilate’s great sin. Fearing the people, he rejects God. Pilate fears man, not God. He gives in to their requests and allows an innocent man to be crucified on a Roman cross.

The sins of the Jews and the sins of Pilate are sins that we too are guilty of. Often we care much more for our outward appearance and piety than our inward souls. We live to be clean at the expense of obeying God. We reject the grace of our savior and attempt to build a righteousness of our own, a righteousness that rejects God. Far too often, we fear others more than God. Our decisions are guided not by a love of Christ but a fear of those around us. We quench the Spirit and fill ourselves with the opinions of others. And in these moments of fear and faithlessness we can join in with the world around us and be like the Jewish people crying out, “Not this man, but Barabbas!” choosing a thief over a loving God (18:40).

But take heart—take heart! Christ is not absent in the midst of this sin. He is right there, patiently enduring and testifying to the truth. Even as he is mistreated, falsely accused, rejected, and gravely wronged, Christ points to the truth. The truth that “light has come into the world” (3:19). The truth that he is the lamb who is slain to ransom a people for God “from every tribe and language and people and nation” (Revelation 5:9). The truth that he is Emmanuel—God with us, and he has come to save his people from their sins (Matthew 1:23).

To all of us who boast in our self-righteousness, who care more for the crowd than for the living God, and at times reject our loving God—grace abounds. Christ’s love for us is greater than our sin. The cross he will soon be crucified on means salvation for all who will repent and believe in him (19:18). Yes our sin is great, but Jesus’ forgiveness is so much greater.

In light of this, let us pray to God and thank him for sending his Son to save us. Let us confess to him that we often trust our own self-righteousness. Acknowledge that we tend to care more about others’ opinions than pleasing our Father. Lastly, let us ask God to forgive us and help us rest in his loving arms where we may find fullness of joy in Christ.



*Crucifixion*

## **JOHN 19:1-16**

It had to be a man, and it had to be a king.

Jesus stands before an uncertain Pilate and a violent Jewish mob. Pilate asks, “Are you a king?” Jesus’ answer does not condemn him in the eyes of the Roman official, but in the eyes of the angry crowd, he is guilty as charged. Pilate tries to release him by appealing to Passover, but the Jews instead want a criminal named Barabbas. When this fails, Pilate strips and beats Jesus nearly to death before placing a crown of thorns and a purple robe on his body. Perhaps this would satisfy the mob’s bloodlust. It does not.

There before the crowd in all of his humiliation, Jesus lies broken and bloodied. Pilate points and exclaims, “Behold the Man!” The author directs us to Jesus’ humanity, the very humanity God himself assumed in order to heal and redeem it (1:14). In that moment, Christ, according to his humanity, truly and deeply experiences the grief of betrayal, the searing pain from the open wounds on his back, and the anguish of looming death. He is the better Adam, true humanity accomplishing salvation for a humanity lost in corruption and darkness. If Christ is not human in this way, we are not saved. It had to be a man.

Pilate continues to play both sides. The Jews do not take pity on the broken and bloodied Jesus, but Pilate tries again to have him released. The crowds will not have it. Pilate then exclaims, "Behold your king!" The irony is overwhelming. Here is the man Jesus in his humiliation, decorated with a crown of thorns and robe of purple, the color of royalty. Little did they know! Still, though a true crown and royal robes are fitting, God demonstrates his lordship, his kingship, through humiliation, taking the worst that humanity had to offer that He might come out the other side victorious (Acts 2:22-24). Though the Jews settled for king Caesar, Christ is the true King, defeating sin and death through his sinless life and victorious resurrection. If Christ is not God in this way, we are not saved. It had to be a king.

Perhaps in our sin and suffering, we believe that God is distant, lifeless, and uncaring. But we point to the suffering Christ in all of his humanity and there see a God closer to us than we are to ourselves. It had to be a man. Perhaps in our sin and suffering, we believe that God is aloof, incapable, and powerless. But we point to Christ the king in all of his divinity and there see a God conquering sin and death for us. It had to be a king. "For the one who was truly God and without sin was still also human. And just as all of humanity was condemned under the sentence of sin through one man... in the same way the blessing of justification by Christ is extended to all through one man..." (Cyril of Alexandria). Behold the Man; Behold the King. Amen.

## **JOHN 19:16-24**

To the passersby, the picture would not be that uncommon. The Roman empire regularly performed crucifixions as the primary mode of public execution. Following hours of torture, those who were to be crucified were forced to carry their cross to a place outside the city where they could be put on display as a warning to any who might be tempted to commit the same crime (19:16-18). Once there, the crucified had their hands and feet nailed to a wooden cross before the implement of torture was erected for all to see. From that position, it became increasingly difficult for the person to breathe, as the posture made it almost impossible for their lungs to fill up with air. The only way they could get a satisfying breath would be to push against a small wooden block below their feet and hoist themselves higher. However, each push

against that step would cause the nails to rip excruciatingly into their appendages, making them grow weaker from the increased blood loss, physical exertion, and inescapable agony. Eventually, the fatigue would cause them to suffocate in open air.

For the Romans, this mode of execution was not only cruel. It also carried an insurmountable social stigma, casting shame and dishonor upon the debased and crucified individual. For the Jews, added disgraces were inflicted upon these people. First, they suffered at the hands of the nations, the Gentiles, who were seen as little more than jackals to the particular people who had received the promises of God. But even more, the Law proclaimed that "anyone hung on a tree is under God's curse" (Deuteronomy 21:23). So these three individuals bear shame and dishonor unmatched in that society.

Yet between two of these criminals, there hangs a battered and bloodied Jewish man from Nazareth, betrayed by his countrymen, abandoned by his closest friends, and, in his own words, forsaken by God (Mark 15:34). But who is this man? Those who knew him best thought he was the Messiah, the promised king who would bring salvation and freedom to the people of Israel. In fact, the indictment hung over this criminal's head reads, in the three most common languages of the region, "King of the Jews" (19:19). Furthermore, it has been reported that this man claims his Father is none other than the LORD, the God of the Jews. But if all that is true, how did it come to pass that the king of God's people hangs on a Roman cross? How could it be that the Jews would tolerate the humiliating execution of their rightful ruler? Even more, why would a divine being subject himself to shame, cursedness, agony, and death, especially if the rumors are true, and he deserved none of it?

This man joins the poet of Psalm 22 in righteous suffering. For he is innocent, convicted of blasphemy and insurrection yet guilty of neither. But, as he has said many times to his followers and to his executioners, it is not on their authority that he finds himself in this tragic display. Rather, it is by his own volition. He follows the will of his Father, a will to make public the realities of human sin which blind the chosen people to their God, undermine the fabric of morality and justice, and require that God consider his Son forsaken and accursed. That is what the Spirit makes visible to the one who looks at Jesus. In the God-Man on the Cross, they see the heinousness of their rebellion and the impropriety of their sin.

But below the tri-lingual inscription, there is another Word written at Golgotha that day. For on that Cross is the manifestation of God's love for his sinful people, taking on their sin and subjecting himself to it so that he might free them from it once and for all. Here is the King of the cosmos, clothed in human flesh, suffering for sinners. Look to him. Come to him. For as much as your sin put him there, it will never suffer the same for you.

## **JOHN 19:25-27**

As a mother, I cannot begin to imagine how Mary felt in this moment. I hesitate to allow my mind and heart to even speculate. What anguish one would feel to witness her son going through such torture and ridicule. I think we are often timid to dive into Mary's life and character because of the idolatry some cultures have created there, but I believe we're doing ourselves a disservice if we don't seek all there is to know about the mother of our Savior.

There isn't time or space to do that today, but as I read this passage, earlier accounts in the gospels came to mind. We quickly learn that young Mary humbly submits to God's call on her life to give birth to the Son of God. Her response to this news is, "Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word" (Luke 1:38). No human being can grasp the magnitude of this assignment. I'm sure if she did, she would be crushed under its weight. I wonder if we receive the same grace and tenderness from the Lord? We desperately want to know our future, but I bet if we knew all that would come our way in this life for the sake of the gospel, we wouldn't be able to handle it! Or maybe we'd be tempted to walk away. Instead, because of the great wisdom and lovingkindness of our Heavenly Father, he gradually makes his plans known, that his children may follow them bit by bit. May we not be so hasty to demand answers and revelations from the Lord, lest we be too weak to stand under the holy responsibility they may require.

There is another scene in Luke where Simeon proclaims rich prophecy over newborn Jesus and his parents stand in awe (Luke 2:29-33). Simeon then addresses Mary: "and a sword will pierce through your own soul also" (Luke 2:38). Sometimes people speak truth that you think you understand, but years later it carries much more clarity and significance. I wonder if Simeon's words came to mind as Mary now

stood before the cross, taking in the past 33 years, watching her Jesus take his final breaths. My soul would be pierced.

We can speculate all day about what Mary may be thinking, but we do not have to do that when contemplating the thoughts of Christ. Jesus makes it very clear what was on his mind in that moment — caring for his mother. Amidst some of the worst physical torture one can endure, knowing the impending wrath to be poured out, our blessed Savior takes the time and strength to communicate with and care for the woman who raised him. In his final hours, he continues to fulfill the faithful command to honor His father and mother (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3). We assume Mary is now a widow, and though she had other children, Jesus still takes seriously the responsibility to honor his mother. He refuses to leave her without the oversight of a faithful, trusted companion. "The disciple whom he loved," who we understand to be John, now had the sacred charge of having Mary as his own mother. Mary would not be the only one benefiting from this relationship. In a time of great mourning, John receives the comfort of caring for and belonging to the woman who raised his friend and Savior. What a gift!

This brief interaction reveals so much about our Jesus. It displays his deep tenderness in the hour of his greatest sorrow. It demonstrates his unwavering obedience to the commands of Scripture. Jesus has perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf and given us an incredible example of how to live a life that honors the God who created us and offers us salvation. How are we doing in following His example? In light of the sacrifice and character of our Savior, may we strive to put the needs of others above ourselves and be faithful to honor those he has put under our care and in authority over us.

## **JOHN 19:28-30**

In our Savior's last moments, we find him broken, bloodied, stretched out and dying on a cross. We find in him in complete weakness. And in a moment of true humanity, our Savior thirsted.

It had been foretold in the Scriptures, that our Savior would thirst (Psalm 22:15). And that when he thirsted, they wouldn't offer him a

drop of cool water or sweet wine. No, they would offer him a sponge filled with vinegar (Psalm 69:21). Jesus knew the task given to him by the Father would not be complete until he endured every suffering, every disgrace, every evil they could offer him. So, as he took his last breaths, he asked for something to quench his thirst and he let them press a vinegar-filled sponge to his lips.

You see, our Savior is not only fully man, but fully God. Therefore, it wasn't simply wine he was thirsting after- though I am sure that was apart of it. When Christ offered his last request, he was thirsting after the completion of the task he had set out to fulfill. He was thirsting after his Father's glory. What a Savior! Even as they scourged him, hammered nails through his hands, and ridiculed him, his thoughts were focused on accomplishing the work God had called him to do. The work that, though we rejected him, might grant us access to the grace and forgiveness of God through his atoning death on the very cross he now clung to. Our God drank the cup of bitter wine, so that we might drink from his fountain of forgiveness. In his deepest moments of suffering, his thoughts were not of inward focused self-pity but rather of his Father's will for our redemption. Hallelujah! What a Savior!

And with the sponge of vinegar wine, he fulfilled every scripture concerning the Messiah. He did not resist even one hardship or discomfort. He was willing and able to bear it all.

Everything that we could not fulfill, every law we could not obey, the standard we could never meet: he was willing and able to bear it.

And so, after tasting the bitter wine, he stretched out his arms, and cried "It is finished." "I have completed the task. I have received every evil mankind has to offer. I have been tempted in every way and have overcome. My suffering is complete." And so he took his last breath, and surrendered his body to death.

See the price of our redemption.

See your Savior who was willing to pay it.

See, not only your Savior's suffering, but his far-surpassing love for mankind and zeal for his Father's glory.

The very God who formed the heavens clothed himself in human flesh to come and pay the full penalty of our sins. He went to the cross as the unblemished and perfect Lamb of God- the perfect sacrifice for our sins.

And through his sacrificial death, all mankind could find release from the punishment and guilt of sin. No more do we have to bear the weight of our sin, for the blameless and unblemished Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, has willingly sacrificed himself for us.

As his final breath gave way, so too did the chains of sin that had for so long bound us and kept us apart from our God. In his fulfillment of the law, he had freed us from the burden of it. In his fulfillment of all suffering, he was able to offer us everlasting joy and unending peace. Because of this moment, we are now able to worship unhindered and unashamed before the throne of God.

In the garden the night before, Christ had prayed with fervor, "Thy will be done, Father. Thy will." And now, he had fully accomplished His Father's will, not forgetting even the smallest detail.

So, he breathed his last breath, and cried out, "It is finished."

And it was. The perfect lamb of God had sacrificed himself for the sins of the world- our sins.

Hallelujah! What a Savior!

## **JOHN 19:31-37**

The Passover was coming. The mob had hurried this execution through because Passover was a sabbath (high day) that must be observed at all costs (19:31). The religious elite had not wanted to miss their chance at this execution, but they also were careful not to exclude themselves from their observances (18:28). They would go from this scene of death and disgrace to one of joyful remembrance.

The temple could likely be seen from the site of the crucifixion. At this hour just before darkness, they were slaughtering the Passover sacrifice (Deuteronomy 16:6). The whole nation was pausing to remember that God brought them from Egypt. He purchased their redemption. That lamb was consumed completely in order that they may be saved. The bones were the only part of the body left unbroken (Numbers 9:12). They retold that in the Exodus, the Lord passed through with his judgment. The destroyer had the right to punish sinful man, but when he saw the blood of the lamb, he passed over their homes. "And the people bowed their heads and worshiped" (Exodus 12).

## JOHN 19:38-42

God passed over the sins of the people because he punished the lamb for them. As the ritual lamb was being killed in the fashion of every other year, the substance of that ancient shadow was dying on this hill, an awful death of suffering and shame (1 Corinthians 5:7). His bones were unbroken, he was without blemish, and he absorbed the judgment of God so that the destroyer may pass over all who have eaten of this holy and true Passover meal.

Many of the gospel writers focus on the fantastic signs that accompanied Christ's last breath. Matthew describes spontaneous resurrections and earthquakes (Matthew 27:51-54); Mark tells of the temple curtain being torn (Mark 15:38-39); Luke notes the centurion's response and the weeping of the crowds (Luke 23:47-49). John, who was present at the resurrection, leaves us with something else (19:26). Silence reigns in his tragic scene.

He does not leave us there, however. A reverent awe takes its place, as John points to the fact that this is the fulfillment of prophecy. He is the one who was pierced in Zechariah 12. The people of God shall mourn as "for an only child, and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10). This mourning, however, leads to our salvation. "On that day there shall be a fountain opened ... to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). Thousands of years of anticipation are now being realized, the day of the Lord has come.

John reminds us that he is bearing witness for our belief (19:35). The old Passover rituals have passed away. That remembrance is replaced by reality. Despite our sin, the one whom we have pierced is the one who opens the fountain for us, by which we may be saved. God has again purchased our redemption from slavery. On this day, by this sacrifice, our hands are loosed from the chains which bound us so tightly. This is the coming of the kingdom of God; it is the realization of all that we have hoped for since the transgression of Adam and Eve. As we remember, we believe. By our belief we drink his cup and eat his flesh and are redeemed. And we bow our heads and worship the Lamb who was slain.

"There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins; and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains! Dear dying lamb, thy precious blood shall never lose its power; until all the ransomed church of God be saved to sin no more!" — William Cowper

Jesus of Nazareth is dead. An untouchable darkness seems to have enveloped the earth. Though hardly any of his disciples witnessed it first-hand, Jesus has breathed his last, and his promises have been left hanging in unfulfillment. There is no sign of any powerful, heavenly kingdom come to earth; Rome still reigns. The Jews are left in their perpetually unfulfilled expectation. At this point in the story, many people went back to their daily Saturday lives. Many people likely mourned. The so-called Son of God lay buried in the ground, and God was silent.

What do we do when God appears to be silent, while we remain without direction and without fulfilled expectation?

We wait, and we worship. We say with the author of the 130th psalm, "I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope" (Psalm 130:5). To our restless souls we say, "For God alone, O my soul, wait in silence, for my hope is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken. On God rests my salvation and my glory; my mighty rock, my refuge is God" (Psalm 62:5-7). This day of Jesus' burial was a Saturday and therefore a Sabbath day, a day of rest, modeled originally after God's day of rest on the 7th day of creation in Genesis 2. The response immediately after the crucifixion of Jesus involved Sabbath and pause, not rash action. It was not the time for wild outbursts or social unrest. It was not the time to stage a scheme to steal the body of Christ in order to "prove" his deity through secret human means and methods. It was a time to wait upon the Lord.

Waiting is not without worship. Even in the midst of a death in Jewish culture, a mourners' prayer called the Kaddish involved adoration to God, faith in him, and acceptance of his sovereign will in the death of the loved one. In this specific text Nicodemus, the Jewish leader whose life was changed in an encounter with Jesus in John 3, honors Jesus in his burial by bringing myrrh and aloes (seventy-five pounds worth!) to the tomb as a part of the "burial custom of the Jews" (19:40). This man who at one time came to Jesus by night for fear that he might be seen with Jesus is now openly participating in the burial of Christ. Nicodemus was unashamed to honor this man, Jesus, who had claimed to be the Anointed One.

Waiting does not imply a cessation to worshipping. The proper response is actually quite the opposite. Even as we wait, we worship as we witness to the One upon whom we wait. By means of how we wait, we are witnesses in the midst of a restless world. When our feeble human eyes only see Jesus buried and bound in linen cloths, we keep our gaze upon him and set our hope on the One who is the everlasting God.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus laid Jesus in a tomb nearby “in which no one had yet been laid” (19:41). It was a human tomb for a human Jesus, one of us. Yet it was a new tomb where no other man had been laid for a man like whom there had been no other--a man who had lived a life that only he could live and died a death that only he could die. Jesus lay buried in the ground, and human history hung in the balance, whether the world knew it or not. And the disciples waited...

## JOHN 20:1-10

The Saturday after Jesus' crucifixion was the darkest day in human history. The disciples had lost all their hope. The light of the world had been snuffed out. It looked like death and the grave still reigned over the earth.

Mary arrived at the tomb first. Seeing that the stone had been rolled away, she made her fearful statement that Jesus' body had been stolen. John arrived at the tomb second, followed by Peter. (As a funny aside, John doesn't find the resurrection of the Lord to be too big of a moment to repeatedly point out how much faster of a runner he is than Peter. Who says that humor has no place alongside of theology and worship?)

So when John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, went into the tomb, it was what he didn't see that excited him. When he saw the empty tomb his mind started to move as fast as his feet. He recalled the words that Jesus had said to him earlier. "These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you" (14:25-26). "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (15:13). "You have sorrow now, but



I will see you again, and your hearts will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you” (16:22). By the illumination of Spirit, when John saw the empty tomb, he believed.

I had a professor in seminary named Dr. Devine. (Yes, a seminary professor’s real name sounds just like ‘divine’—don’t worry, he makes that joke at least twice a week.) Dr. Devine often said, “If the resurrection isn’t real, then line up the cocaine.” That was his paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 15:32 where Paul writes, “If the dead are not raised, then let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” In other words, if the resurrection isn’t real, if there is no hope beyond the grave, if all we have are these fleeting days and years on earth, then we might as well squeeze every ounce of earthly pleasure that we can out of it.

But if the resurrection is real, then that changes everything. If the resurrection is real, then we do have hope beyond the grave. If the resurrection is real, then this life isn’t as good as it gets. If the resurrection is real, then Satan has lost, Jesus is alive, and you and I must live differently.

Brothers and sisters, spend some time meditating on the implications of the resurrection. Think about what the empty tomb means. Think about how sin and Satan no longer dominate you. Think about how death no longer has final victory. Think about how powerful Jesus is because he overcame death and Satan. Spend some time at the empty tomb with Peter, John, and Mary worshiping our resurrected Savior.

## **JOHN 20:11-18**

Mary Magdalene’s relationship with Jesus had dramatically changed her life. She had been possessed by seven demons, had been healed by Jesus, and then accompanied him and his disciples as they traveled throughout cities and villages, providing for their needs from her own pocket (Luke 8:1-3). She was with him throughout his ministry, as she was with him in his death on the cross, watching from a distance along with other women who had ministered to him (Matthew 27:56). Even after his death, Mary’s actions display the importance of Jesus in her life; the day of Jesus’ resurrection, she approached the tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark (20:1).

It is no wonder that she stood weeping outside his empty tomb when she realized that someone must have taken his body. Jesus had been her teacher, her healer, her offer of hope of a Messiah for her people, and she fully believed he was dead. The angels inside the tomb asked her why she was weeping, and she explained it was because she did not know where Jesus’ body had been taken. Turning from the tomb, she saw another man standing before her. She had no expectation it could possibly be Jesus; she did not recognize him. Perhaps she it was because of the tears in her eyes or because Jesus’ resurrected body looked different than it had before. Or maybe she was prevented from recognizing him immediately. But Jesus asks, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” (20:15). His questions seek to break through her unbelief and forgetfulness of his previously promised resurrection (11:25). Still not recognizing him, she asks Jesus if he knows where they have taken the body of her Lord.

After this, Jesus calls Mary by her name, and Mary recognizes him and says, “Rabboni!” Imagine the relief and joy in Mary as she realizes her Savior is not dead. This recognition reminds me of Jesus’ earlier teaching: “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (10:27-28). Mary heard again the voice of her Shepherd who had cared for her so deeply and followed him yet again. Though she felt despair and had forgotten (or disbelieved) his promises of eternal life, she remembered again through his gracious reminder. In fact, he entrusted her to be the first witness of his resurrection. The courts of law in that day would not recognize the testimony of a woman as valid, but Jesus did. He commanded her to go to his disciples and tell them of his impending ascension into heaven. After this, it seems Mary had no doubts. She went and announced what she had seen to the disciples, even though they did not initially believe her.

Jesus is our Shepherd, just as he was Mary Magdalene’s. He has defeated death for us. We can trust that he will never leave or forsake us, regardless of the darkness we may feel all around. Remember that in Jesus we will have peace; take heart, he has overcome the world (16:33).

## JOHN 20:19-23

The silence is deafening. You are overwhelmed by grief from the events of the past week. Although you are gathered in a room with your closest friends, this provides little to no consolation, because you are hiding from those who want to kill you. All hope has faded because your leader was arrested and gruesomely executed. Everyone hoped that he would be the one to change things. There have been reports from some that he is not in the grave anymore. You are unsure about the reports. You think maybe his body was stolen, or perhaps the people giving the reports are hallucinating, or maybe, just maybe, he is alive.

This is the reality for the disciples of Jesus in our passage today. They are scared, locked in a room, and without hope or a future. Jesus suddenly appeared to them in the room they were hiding away in. "Peace be with you," Jesus says (20:19). This is an understandable statement from Jesus, because if your leader, who you assumed was dead, suddenly appears out of nowhere you might be prone to panic. Jesus consoles the worries and fears of his disciples not only with his words but also with signs. He points to his nail pierced hands and torn side to show them that it is truly him, in the flesh. The disciples' faces turn from gloom to gladness, when they realize that it really is Jesus before them. The peace Jesus offers in his words and body carry a higher significance than the temporary consolation of his disciples.

His words and body provide a twofold testimony that he has accomplished what he said he was going to do. His words carry with them the beautiful message of the gospel that, because of what Christ has done, there is now peace with the Father. Jesus' body is tangible proof that peace with God has been secured. His bloody and bruised body reveal that he truly died and was raised from the dead, thus securing peace with God.

Jesus utters these words again right before he gives his disciples a commission. Jesus says, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you" (20:21). If these words do not arrest you with a crippling sense of inadequacy, then you do not understand what Jesus is saying. As Jesus was sent by the Father to come into the world, Jesus sends us into the world in a similar manner. How can this be? Jesus is the sinless son of God, and I can barely make it an hour without falling short. Jesus could turn water into wine, heal the blind, multiply

bread, walk on water, raise the dead, and rise from the grave himself. I find it hard to muster up the strength to make it through the day, let alone perform a miracle. Yet this is what Jesus tells us. He commissions the disciples and us to go into the world. He does not send us into the world alone though. Jesus' commission is followed by a provision. The provision is God himself in the person of the Holy Spirit. This verse seems to be foreshadowing Pentecost when the Spirit would come upon the apostles ( Luke 24:47-49). The message is clear. The Holy Spirit is enabling the disciples to preach the gospel of forgiveness.

## JOHN 20:24-29

The phrase "doubting Thomas" is used often to represent someone who is naturally skeptical or slow to believe. But, if we look at this text more closely, Thomas shows the same lack of faith displayed by the other disciples. None of them believe Mary when she comes bearing good news that Christ had risen. Nonetheless, Thomas and the other disciples show a staggering lack of faith given their time with Jesus. Thomas was one of the 12 and had spent a great deal of time with Christ. He had regularly shown his dedication to Christ and his willingness to suffer with him before his death (11:16). Thomas also openly struggled with doubt and a lack of understanding that is indicative of the rest of the disciples (14:5). There are several lessons we can learn from this text.

First, we are all doubting Thomases. This side of the cross we will always have a broken and partial faith. We will struggle and toil to believe the reality of the gospel in our lives until we see Christ face to face in his new kingdom. Here we see that God meets us where we are. Thomas was weak in faith, and so he met him where he was at. Thomas was one of his, so he provided what Thomas needed for him to believe. Christ loves us and as his followers has provided what we need for faith. Faith is a gift from God. Ephesians 2:8 says, "By grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God." Where we are weak in faith we should look to the Lord and trust his provision to give us the faith that we need. This is a gift from the Father that keeps us humble and dependent. However, this gift of faith is not instant. A significant amount of time passes from when Thomas declares that he will not believe without touching Christ's wounds and Christ appearing to him. When we go through seasons of doubt there will be waiting. God will provide the faith we need in his

perfect timing. This may make the season of doubt even more challenging but we must trust the Lord's perfect wisdom. This is also true for those to whom we are evangelizing. When people struggle to believe the claims of Christ we must not grow weary to intercede for them knowing that it may take many years before the Lord provides the gift of faith needed.

Secondly, we should seek greater faith. There are many during this time that do not have the same needs as Thomas has. They hear the report that Jesus has risen and they believe. They do not need to see to believe. Christ says in verse 29: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." In a very literal sense that is all Christians today, but in times of disbelief our natural disposition is to ask for Christ to prove or reveal himself to us more fully. How often do we seek to hear the voice of God, to see him work or move in such a way that "proves" the truth of the gospel? This way of thinking is not a request for greater faith. It is not like the cry of the father whose child was possessed by an unclean spirit: "Lord help my unbelief" (Mark 9:24). Instead, our requests for "proof" are attempts to minimize our dependency on God. Our cry should be for the Father to grow our faith. We should not seek to have God prove himself but rather seek daily to live in such a way that we experience the faithfulness of the father, praying for him to grow our faith. This will in turn grow our dependency on God and our intimacy with him. Paul says that faith is the "evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). We should daily petition the father to grow our faith not by sight but by daily experiencing his faithfulness in our lives.

*Give us lips to sing Thy glory,*

*Tongues thy mercy to proclaim,*

*Throats that shout the hope that  
fills us,*

*Mouths to speak Thy holy name.*

*Alleluia, alleluia!*

*May the light which thou dost  
send*

*Fill our songs with alleluias,*

*Alleluia without end!*

*God the Father, light-creator,*

*To Thee laud and honor be.*

*To Thee, Light of Light begotten,*

*Praise be sung eternally.*

*Holy Spirit, light-revealer,*

*Glory, glory be to Thee.*

*Mortals, angels, now and ever*

*Praise the holy Trinity!*

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