

rise.

AN EIGHT DAY EASTER DEVOTIONAL

PALM SUNDAY THROUGH EASTER SUNDAY



vineyard usa

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Quote from N.T. Wright is from: Wright, N.T. *Surprised By Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church.* Harper One, New York, 2008, p. 50.

Written by Dan Wilt, M.Min.

Dear Friends,

Easter is a time of year when we, as the Body of Christ, embrace the power of the resurrection once again.

With the apostle Paul, we recall the reality of Romans 10:9-10, *"If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved"* (NIV).

RISE: An Eight Day Easter Devotional will point you and your church back to the center of our faith – the resurrection of the Lord Jesus at Easter. You will be encouraged and renewed as you follow Jesus from Palm Sunday to the day death was conquered – and Life won the victory.

This Easter season, our prayer for you is that you experience, in a fresh and profound way, the resurrection life of Jesus at work in you.

Take that life to your family, your church, your job, and your streets. Be a beacon of love in your city, showing that Jesus' resurrection not only changes our past, but our present and future as well.

From the Vineyard to you, have a breakthrough Easter season.

For the greater glory of God, and the well-being of people,

Phil Strout
National Director, Vineyard USA

Easter is a time to rise.

Imagine a scene in the earliest years of the church. A young girl, a former prostitute who has been transformed by a dynamic experience with Jesus (and the love of his followers), is about to step into a pool filled with the cool waters of baptism. She is surrounded by other women of every age and social status in society. Their soft eyes meet hers, framed in smiles of loving acceptance. Joyful tears stream down every face in the room.

With a few words from a leader, and a profession of faith spilling gratefully from her trembling lips, she is immersed into the waters beneath her. In the next moment, she is ripped from this watery tomb – *she rises*. With laughter and hope electrifying the room, she begins a completely new life defined no longer by who she was – but by who she now is in Christ. "Behold," Jesus said, "I am making everything *new*" (Rev. 21:5).



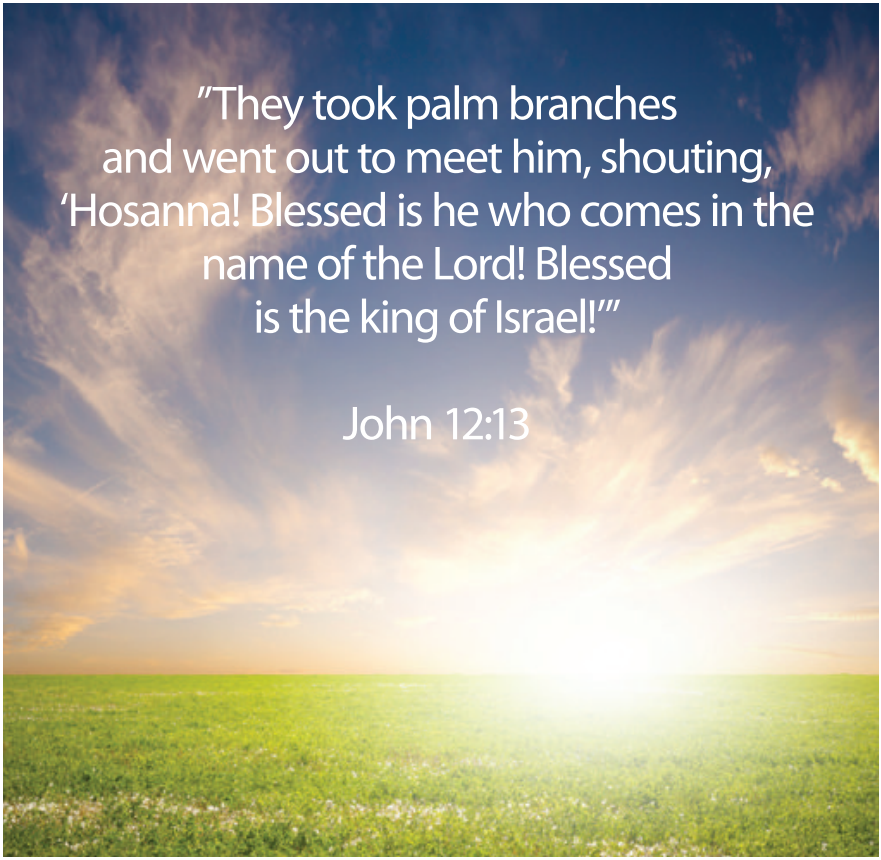
Baptism has always been the perfect visual for what happens when the Easter story becomes our own story. We die with Christ in the image of immersion, entering his tomb with him cut off from the very breath of life. Then, pulled from the waters by saving hands reaching out to us, we are raised with Christ from our spiritual and physical death.

The message of Easter, and the "Holy Week" that leads up to it, is quite straightforward. Because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, no form of death has ultimate hold on us anymore. We are in union with Christ (Rom. 6:3-5), we are incorporated into his body, the church (1 Cor. 12:12-14), we receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and cleansing from our sins (Heb. 10:19-22). We are each, quite literally, *a new creation* (2 Cor. 5:17), born again by the abounding Grace and resurrecting love of our Lord. When we acknowledge the risen Jesus as our Lord and King, we are raised with Christ (Col. 3:1) to a new and living hope, and we are set on a course of inner and outer transformation. *We have risen with Christ*.

At Easter, Jesus did not rise to make bad people good. He rose to make dead people live. Easter is your story, and mine. "On the third day," we say with the great creed, "he rose from the dead." This Easter, with him, we *rise*.

palm sunday

Palm Sunday is the first day of what is called "Holy Week" in church history. Sometimes called "Passion Week," this series of 7 days leads the worshipper along a journey with Jesus through the gates of Jerusalem, to a cruel cross – and ultimately to the celebration of Resurrection Day. For the Christian, there is no more central event in human history than what is celebrated at Easter. As Peter said, "...God raised him from the dead.... God has raised this Jesus to life... God has made him both Lord and Messiah" (Acts 2:24, 32, 36). Without the resurrection of Jesus, Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:14, our faith is "useless." We begin our journey at Palm Sunday, as Jesus enters Jerusalem at the culmination of 3 years of ministry, riding on a donkey – an ancient symbol of a king coming in peace (Zec. 9:9). Waving palm branches, the crowds exuberantly celebrate as Jesus enters into the heart of Jerusalem – the "City of Peace."



see the triumphal entry.

OPEN THE GATES

And invite the King to enter.

Is there a gate, a doorway to your heart, through which Jesus is about to enter?

In John 12:12-15, we are told that as Jesus entered Jerusalem, he was greeted by a large crowd waving branches and hailing his arrival in the Holy City. He had just been anointed at Bethany with a burial perfume, and the following picture is laid out: *"The next day the great crowd that had come for the festival heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting, 'Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the king of Israel!"*

At the entrance to many homes, there is a gate. It marks the first passage way onto someone's property. From the gate, there is usually a small "road" that leads up to the front door. We call it a sidewalk, but it could be understood to simply be a road designed for feet! According to the size of the home, the journey from the gate to the door can be very short – or very, very long. Through the door is the heart of the home.

The journey from the Palm Sunday Gate into the "hearts of the Jews" of Jerusalem, was quite a long journey for Jesus. The initial celebration of his coming was marked by singing, shouting, and a party that would rival the best of today's festive celebrations. However, those shouts of acclaim quickly transformed into cries for crucifixion as Jesus cut a straight and painful path to the heart of his people.

As Jesus approaches the gate of your life this season, open the front door and say "Yes" to him walking right into the most vulnerable place, the very heart, of your life. Tables will be turned. You will go through a transformation that may be as painful as it is wonderful. But there is no other place you would rather Jesus be than right in the middle of your beautiful mess.

PRAYER

For Palm Sunday.

Lord, I open the gate of my life for you to enter this Easter, and I open my heart to your transforming presence at the same time. Help me to yield to your will, to allow the mess, and to say "Yes."

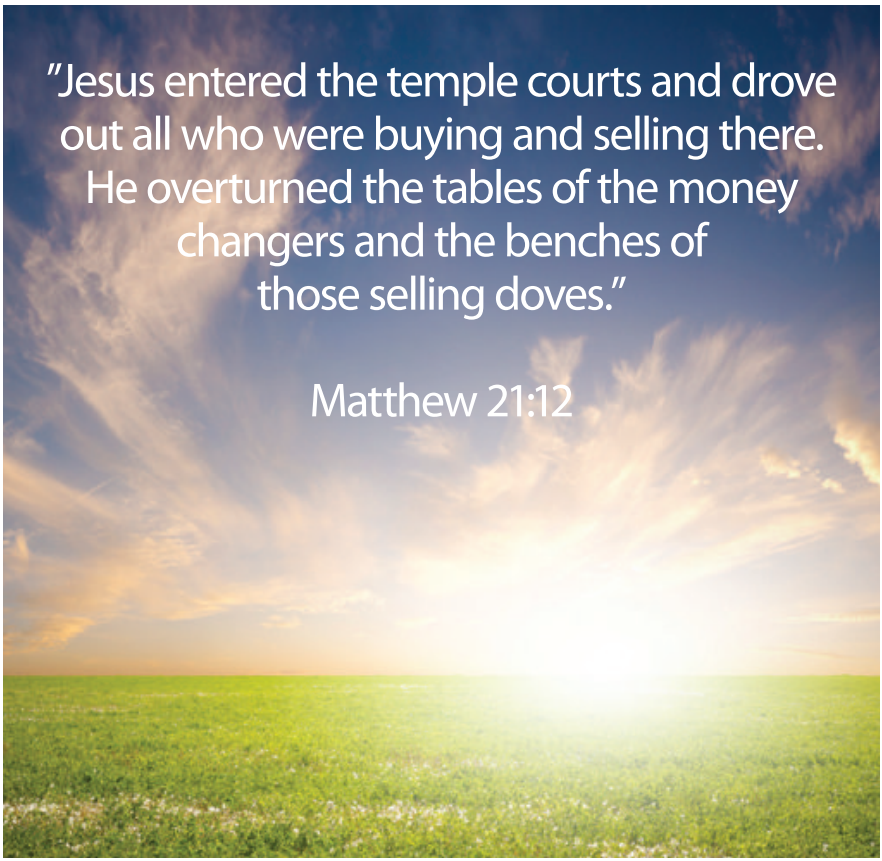
QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

In what area(s) of your life do you find it the hardest to let Jesus take control? Is there a door that has been continually shut, that it's time to open?

holy monday

Holy Monday is the second day of Holy Week. The most notable of moments remembered on this day is that of Jesus "cleansing the Temple." Imagine the scene. Jesus has entered the city during one of the most important faith festivals of his day. Hundreds of thousands of Jewish pilgrims are milling about everywhere. They have made a pilgrimage from many countries to celebrate the great feast of Passover (Deut. 16:16). Offering sacrifices and paying their taxes, the Jews engage the services of animal sellers and money changers, who provide a service on behalf of the priests. Even the faithful poor are buying small doves to offer as their act of worship. A loud, smelly "marketplace experience" has been created in a sacred space, during a time meant for worship and repentance. Jesus sees this, and becomes enraged. Flipping tables and forming a whip of cords (John 2:15), he shouts, "My house will be called a house of prayer!" (Matt. 21:13; Is. 56:7).



turn the table on idolatry.

SEE WHAT GOD SEES

And put a stop to injustice.

Is Jesus inviting you to partner with him in challenging injustice?

In Matt. 21:12, we see Jesus in a holy rage that seems out of character with the "God of Love" we so often talk about in churches. Jesus seems to lose a measure of control as he encounters the market scene in the temple: *"Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves."*

Why would currency exchanges and dove booths be so appalling, so revolting, as to demand such a harsh, physical display of disgust? Who would have been the most likely to be undercut in their currency exchange having travelled from a far away land? The *poor and uneducated*. Who would have been the most likely to only be able to afford the smallest creature, a dove, to offer in the worship setting of that day? *The poor and the uneducated*.

Jesus' heightened response may have been, in many ways, toward the kind of misguided worship systems that ultimately devalue the poor. Today, systems (religious and otherwise) powered by money-making greed and carelessness with the weak and vulnerable are no less worthy of a royal table turning than those in Jesus' day. Injustice always flows from idolatry and misdirected worship. When we forget who God is, we forget who we are. When we forget who we are in God's eyes, we forget the value of others.

We can all participate in a world that crushes the weak and the poor, without even being aware of the part we play. Ask God to show you if there is someone to be cared for, someone who needs you to be their voice, in your neighborhood, town, or city. Show them the grace of God, and let your actions be marked by generosity.

PRAYER

For Holy Monday.

Lord, give me eyes to see what you see when you look at the world around me. I want to participate in acts of love and justice, carrying your love to the world.

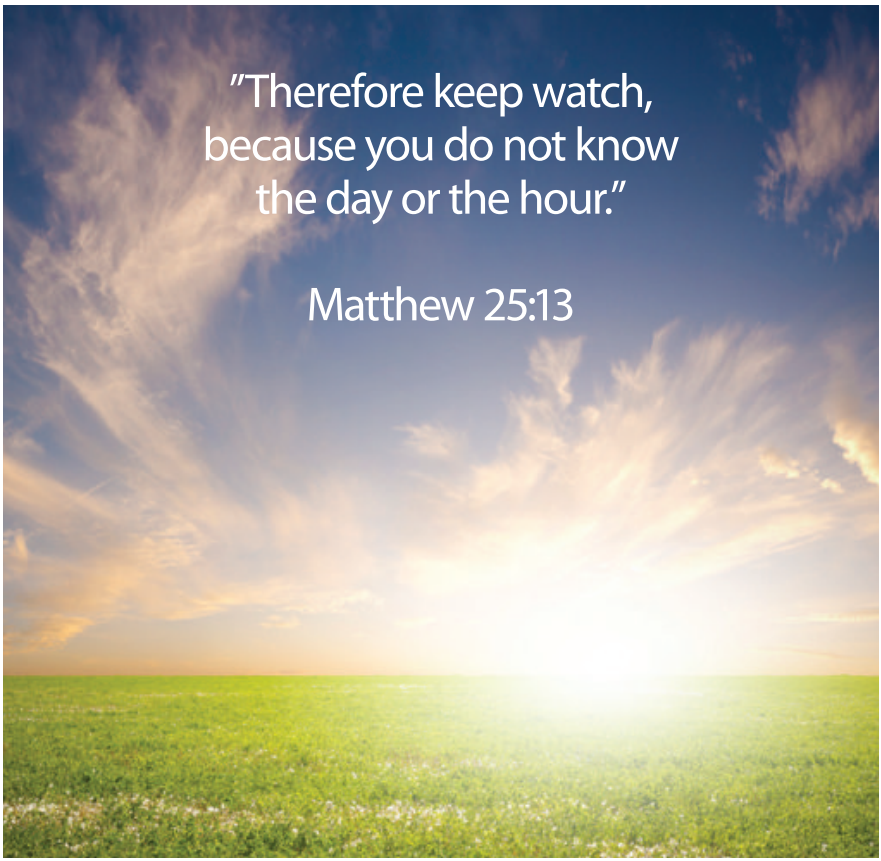
QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

Is there an opportunity to weave more care for the poor and the socially vulnerable into your life? If you got involved, what kind of effect do you think it would have on both your public and private life of worship?

holy tuesday

Holy Tuesday is the third day of Holy Week. On the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem and overlooking its grandeur, many great biblical events occurred. Approximately 200 feet above the level of the city, Jesus would have taught his disciples here often, and spent time in private devotion. Here is where, in just a few days, he would ask for the cup of his fate to be removed from him (Matt. 26:39). Like a flashback after the temple cleansing, we see Jesus overlooking the city, weeping for his people. "How often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing" (Matt. 23:37b). As the disciples hear this, one of Jesus' teachings comes to their minds. The Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) speaks of those who are alert and keep watch, ready and waiting for their bridegroom to come. As Jerusalem enters its greatest redemptive festival, will the Jews be prepared to receive the "Lamb of God"?



wait in the right way.

GET READY, GET SET

For Christ to make his move.

Have you ever run ahead of God, or lagged behind, because of the wait?

In Matt. 25:1-13, Jesus tells his disciples a fascinating, but confusing parable about the Kingdom of God. It is a parable about 10 virgins who are waiting for a bridegroom to arrive to begin a celebration.

Five realize that he could be early, or he could be late. They are prepared with enough oil for their lamps, either way. The other five, called "foolish," are only prepared for him to come on *their terms; on their timetable.* They don't have enough oil if he is late. They are not prepared. Verses 10-12 show us the final scene: *"But while they [the foolish virgins] were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!' But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.'"*

Waiting can be hard work. Most of us don't like to wait because we feel as though waiting is a waste of time. We demand that God work according to our timetable, and when He doesn't, we can get very, very bent out of shape. We run ahead of Him, doing what we think needs to be done, instead of waiting to see the best plan that only He can reveal.

In this parable, Jesus is teaching his disciples, and us, that we can wait anxiously and end up diverting God's best plans for our lives. Or, we can wait well – being prepared by staying in the place of humble worship, keeping our fingers on the pulse of God's character by taking in His Word, and restraining ourselves from spiritual laziness so that we don't miss what God is doing due to spiritual numbness. Wait well – and be ready for Christ to make his move.

PRAYER

For Holy Tuesday.

Lord, I believe that waiting, and waiting well, is the way to my heart becoming completely yours. When I have been impatient or lazy and have missed You, or run ahead of You, I ask for forgiveness. Teach me to wait in the right way.

QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

Is there an area of your life where you believe you may be jumping ahead of God? If not, is there an area in which you might be spiritually lazy, not ready to perceive God's next move?

holy wednesday

Holy Wednesday is the fourth day of Holy Week. On this day, church history remembers two very different responses to Jesus. The disciple Judas is remembered as the betrayer of the Lord to his captors. His loss of perspective, love of money, and ultimate suicidal path are iconic of those whose "treasures" are misguided. His lack of ability to "rightly value" his Lord precipitates the psychological disease that marks a life distant from God. Mary, however, is quite a different story. John 12 tells us that it is she who pours a "pint of pure nard" – a very expensive perfume – on Jesus' feet. Costing the equivalent of a year's wages (according to Judas), the perfume runs everywhere. She begins to wipe Jesus' feet with her long hair. As the fragrance of worship fills the room, Judas is disgusted, while Jesus notes that her lavish act of worship is alluding to his anointing for burial (v. 7). Mary, the one content to sit at the feet of Jesus, has chosen to make her worship lavish.



make worship lavish.

CHOOSE YOUR BEST

To give Jesus as your worship.

Are you going "over the top" with your worship, or are you withholding?

In John 12:1-3, Jesus is at a dinner party, thrown in his honor, with his disciples at his side. According to the Gospel of John, Lazarus, who has been raised from the dead, is at the meal provided by his sisters, Mary and Martha. *"Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume."*

In this graphic image of worship, a woman who has received more from God than she could ever give in return, has "lost her mind" in worship. Here, we see no restraint, no mitigating or piecemealing of resources. She has grabbed a jar of a very expensive perfume and has only one mission – to say thanks for all that Christ has done.

In Mary's case, the raising of her brother from the dead might seem a fitting reason for her to pull out the stops and go over the top with the pouring out of the perfume. But wiping his feet with her hair? Her most beautiful trait as a woman is turned into a mop, a wiping cloth, to evidence to Jesus that nothing – absolutely nothing – is worth more to her than him.

What do you have in your life that would be "over the top" if spent on an act of worship that was beyond belief? Even if it made you look foolish, what kind of gift goes beyond what's easy to offer, and takes great faith to offer?

To withhold worship breeds cynicism, doubt, and lack of faith. To give it, lavishly and liberally, sets us free to truly believe and to take God at His Word.

PRAYER

For Holy Wednesday.

Lord, I want to be known by you, not as one who withholds worship, but rather as one who freely gives you my very best response of thanks. Take me to that place of intimacy with you.

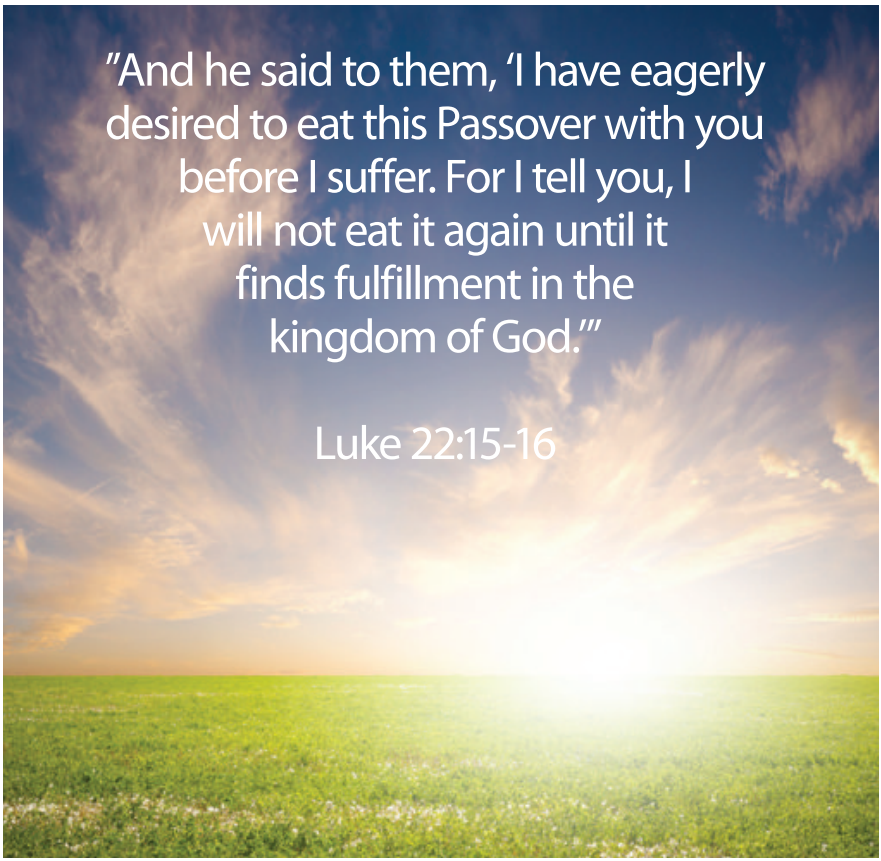
QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

Is there a moment of worship in your past where you can honestly say that you gave God everything you had to offer without holding anything back?

holy thursday

Holy Thursday (also known as Maundy Thursday) is the fifth day of Holy Week. Jesus gathers with his disciples in an "upper room" (a room that would have been a large, second-floor hall filled with dining furniture for the occasion) to celebrate the Passover meal. At this meal, Jesus institutes the breaking of the bread (his body), and the passing of the cup (his blood), a sacred action that became the church's central act of worship for the past few thousand years – the *Eucharist* (or *communion*). From here, he and a few disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane at the base of the Mount of Olives to pray. This is a place they would have frequented throughout Jesus' ministry. It is on this night that the "suffering servant" passage of Isaiah 52-53 begins to reveal its fulfillment, as Jesus cries out to the Father for the cup to be taken from him, literally sweats blood in his distress, and receives the kiss of betrayal from a friend.



feast on the last supper.

THE BREAD AND CUP

Are your invitation to new life.

Can you see through communion to the future feast to come?

In Luke 22:15-16, Jesus has gathered with his disciples in an upper room to share in the Passover meal. He shares these foreshadowing words that must have startled and unsettled the disciples: *"I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."*

Passover is a sacred season when the Jews remember their great deliverance from the tyranny of the Egyptian Pharoah. Painting the blood of a sacrificial spring lamb on the doorposts of their home, the Jews encountered the deliverance of God as the angel of death "passed over" their homes, yet slayed the firstborn of the Egyptians. Pharoah relented, and the Hebrews were set free (Ex. 12:1-30).

Jesus is now aware that what lay before him is nothing less than his self-sacrifice on behalf of the human race.

Just as a lamb in the Passover story meant the freedom from death for the ancient Hebrews, so too his sacrificial death – as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world – would vanquish humanity's nemesis – Death.

Bread is broken, and Jesus tells them it is his body. Wine is poured, and Jesus tells them it is his blood. He is seeing his *via dolorosa*, his way of suffering, laid out before him. And yet, he is seeing beyond it as well.

With words that could be spoken now to you and I as much as to the disciples around that table, Jesus makes a promise that is inherent in his words of table blessing. "Until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God" is Jesus' way of promising a future beyond the cross, beyond the struggles of this life. That promise is ours to be remembered – every time we take the bread and drink the cup.

PRAYER

For Holy Thursday.

Lord, I look toward the day when every tear is wiped away, every disease is healed, death is vanquished, and your kingdom is established on the earth. Let me see Your future.

QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

Are you living with a clear view of where God's future is leading us? Are you getting beyond what you see, to what you know to be true?

good friday

Good Friday is the sixth day of Holy Week. After Jesus' betrayal in the garden, he is dragged before a Jewish tribunal led by the high priest, Caiaphas. They place him before Pilate, the Roman prefect of Judaea, to pursue a death sentence. After Pilate's questioning, Jesus is sent on to Herod, who then sends him back to Pilate. Having declared that his kingdom is "not of this world," Jesus is beaten, scourged, rejected by the crowd that welcomed him on Palm Sunday morning, and finally sentenced to the excruciating torture of crucifixion. The way of suffering (*via dolorosa*) for Jesus begins, and 6 hours on a cross yield horrible pain, darkness, a criminal's forgiveness, and a torn temple curtain. For the disciples, the light of the world they knew has gone completely black.

"It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: 'THE KING OF THE JEWS.'"

Mark 15:25-26

enter the cross.

ENTER THE DARKNESS

To follow Jesus.

Are you walking by sight or walking by faith in the Son of God?

Jesus' love for his people, his miraculous ministry, and his prophetic posture have all leaned toward this one fateful day – the day of his crucifixion. The historical record simply states these facts about the moment Jesus fully becomes the "suffering servant" that Isaiah 52-53 describes: *"It was nine in the morning when they crucified him. The written notice of the charge against him read: 'THE KING OF THE JEWS'" (Mark 15:25-26).*

There is a timeless phrase that is meant to inspire hope and courage in us when we are facing a difficult time. We say, "I'm seeing the light at the end of the tunnel." We happily, when in darkness, move toward the light.

Darkness can mean confinement, disorientation, danger, and endings. Conversely, light means freedom, clarity, safety, and new beginnings.

But Jesus has modeled for us that sometimes our best choice is to follow him into the dark places of our lives. We want to cut and run, thinking there can be no good in facing our pain or entering a season where our ability to see what's ahead is diminished. Yet the words of the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 5:7 are inspired by what he saw Jesus do, and followed as his own life mandate: "For we live by faith, and not by sight." This journey will always be a walk by faith – confidence in that for which we hope, and assurance about the things we cannot see (Heb. 11:1).

As Jesus is beaten, cajoled, and humiliated through the streets of his beloved Jerusalem, he ends up with nails through his hands and feet, raised to the skies for all to see suffer. He could have avoided this with the turn of a phrase, or a confession of insanity. Instead, he knew that darkness is where death lives, and instead of running away from it, he fearlessly walked right into its waiting arms.

PRAYER

For Good Friday.

My Lord, to think that you would enter darkness in order to fill it with light gives me hope. In my own darkness, I choose to find your light shining – and to carry it wherever you want me to.

QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

Is there a world of darkness that Jesus is inviting you to shine his light within?

holy saturday

Holy Saturday is the seventh and final day of Holy Week. Jesus' body is in the garden tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, where he and Nicodemus had prepared the body with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, and wrapped it in strips of linen. Guards are posted in front of the tomb at the request of the chief priests and Pharisees, and a seal is placed on the stone. We can imagine that the disciples are paralyzed by both grief and fear over the events of the past week. It is only a matter of time until the powers of their age come for *them*, and the tortures will be as severe as those of their Lord. They have given their lives to a dead messiah – and yet his love, life, teaching, miracles, and promises have completely altered their souls. In bewilderment, they hide in silence – and they wait.

"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."

John 16:22

live between the times.

THE NOW AND NOT YET
Is a tension we must embrace.

Is there a gift that can only be found when our hope and reality are different?

In John 16:22, Jesus has given his disciples words that must have bewildered them. *"...Now is your time of grief,"* he says, *"but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."* Later in John 16:33 he then adds these words, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Divine bewilderment is not unfamiliar to most of us. One moment, our world is pristine, full of possibilities, and marked by a sense of blessing and fulfillment. Then, suddenly, shadows fall. Night engulfs our brightest day in blackness and fear. We are bewildered, pierced by a great unknowing that causes us to question everything that came before this darkness, and everything that will come after.

This was the lot of the disciples on the Saturday after Good Friday. Knowing that the Jewish religious leaders were smelling blood, their loss of Jesus was compounded by their fear of every knock on the door. Just a week before, they had been revelling in the miracles of Jesus, winning a popularity contest among crowds that were following them across the landscape of Israel. Now, with the cheers and shouts of Palm Sunday still ringing in their ears, their popularity had fallen to the place of their Lord – they were only seen as worthy of a tortured death.

Into our bewildering world, the Kingdom of God enters with force. One minute a miracle occurs and a boy is healed of blindness. Yet, a minute later, we recall that slave trafficking continues and young girls lose their innocence forever at the hands of lust-filled men.

The Kingdom of the now and the not yet means that we live out the truth of God's saving love, even in the face of dire circumstances. We watch for God's gifts along the way, the echoes of His presence that keep us centered in faith.

PRAYER
For Holy Saturday.

Lord, the tensions of this life can disillusion and paralyze me. Take the reins, and teach me to embrace your Kingdom life each day.

QUESTION
For Your Easter Reflection.

What future does God have for us?

Easter Sunday

Easter Sunday is "Resurrection Day." Today we re-enact, retell, and reimagine the unfathomable event on a morning in Israel over two thousand year ago. In many traditions this day begins the Eastertide festival, a "resurrection party" that goes on for 50 days and culminates in Pentecost – where we celebrate the coming of the Holy Spirit. A woman visits the tomb. A stone is rolled away. Jesus is seen to be *alive*. The Body of Christ is unleashed in passion, love, and faith on an unsuspecting empire. Throughout this day and the Easter season, we reclaim the saving work of Christ. Death attempted to swallow into its tomb the very Giver of Life – who transformed the tomb into a womb of *new creation life*. Sin and death have been conquered for *eternity* – and also in the *present*. Christ's resurrection life is at work within us who have said "Yes" to Jesus and are being changed into his likeness. As a bearer of Christ's resurrection life, one who is a new creation ("Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" – 2 Cor. 5:17), you are now commissioned to join God's great work of righting the world, distributing Jesus' love, and confronting the powers of our age with the empowering life of Christ in you (Col. 1:27). This is the kingdom life – the Easter life.

"...The resurrection, both of Jesus and then in the future of his people, is the foundation of the Christian stance of allegiance to a different king, a different Lord. Death is the last weapon of the tyrant, and the point of the resurrection, despite much misunderstanding, is that death has been defeated. Resurrection is not the redescription of death; it is its overthrow and, with that, the overthrow of those whose power depends on it" (Wright, *Surprised By Hope*, p. 50).

"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

John 11:25-26

Rise with Christ to Life.

CHRIST THE LORD

Is Risen Today! Hallelujah!

Is there a stone in front of your grave that it's time for Jesus to roll away?

Hear the glorious Easter story in Luke 24:1-6, once again: *"On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, 'Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen!'"*

Like the crash of a celestial battering ram, the angel announces that the Lord Jesus Christ has risen to life from the dead! Every hope, every dream, every spoken and unspoken longing of human life on planet earth finds its fulfillment in an empty tomb in first century Palestine. The resurrection of Jesus is the surest confirmation that God not only loves the world, but is making all things new (Rev. 21:5). Triumphing over the enemy of our souls, the devil, Christ has walked, quite literally, to hell and back. What is in his hands at the end of that journey? A souvenir. The *keys of death* (Rev. 1:18).

The gate is open! Death will not hold us. Jesus has made death's tomb a womb of everlasting life!

In the resurrection, Jesus has put the world to rights after the first Adam welcomed sin into the human story (1 Cor. 15:45). Living a blameless life, he walked our journey, familiar in all respects with our humanity (Heb. 4:15). Rejected by humankind (Is. 53:3), his love led him to a cross, and in yielding to death he became the Chief Cornerstone (Eph. 2:20) on which his community of love, the church, is being built.

Rise with Christ this Easter Day. Welcome him to lift you from the graves that hold you, and to penetrate the darkness of your fear with an enduring confidence that he is truly *making all things new*. Join your resurrected Lord in the healing of a broken world, and show everyone Jesus is alive by living "a life of love" – keeping yourself in God's love as you wait for his mercy to bring you to eternal life (Jude 1:21).

PRAYER

For Easter Sunday.

Lord, I choose to rise with you. Lead me.

QUESTION

For Your Easter Reflection.

How will I now live as an heir of Christ's resurrection life?



The Vineyard Movement, since birth, has valued seeing individual Christians experience God in their daily lives. Through spiritual practices such as worship, fellowship, mission, the reading and application of Scripture, soul care, family care, healing of the broken, cultural influence, the compassionate ministry of the Holy Spirit, and neighbor-love, the Vineyard community of churches seeks to be intentional about nurturing the lives of those who call us their family. To find out more about the Vineyard, visit www.vineyardusa.org.

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