

L E N T 2 0 2 2

Lent is the period of 40 days which comes before Easter. Beginning on Ash Wednesday, Lent is a season of reflection and preparation before the celebrations of Easter. By observing the 40 days of Lent, Christians remember Jesus Christ's sacrifice and withdrawal into the desert for 40 days.

JESSICA ELLERTSON

in

READ

MATTHEW 21: 1-11

MARK 11: 1-11 LUKE 19:28-44 JOHN 12:12-16 In biblical times, palm branches often symbolized goodness and victory. In fact, Solomon's temple is described this way:

"Around all the walls of the house he carved engraved figures of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, in the inner and outer rooms." 1 Kings 6:29

Today we celebrate Palm Sunday in remembrance of the palms laid in Jesus' path as he entered Jerusalem. Jesus' purpose in riding into Jerusalem was to declare publicly that he was the Messiah promised by the Prophets.

> "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." Zechariah 9:9

Yet, the contrast could not be more clear — here is the King of Israel riding in on a donkey, the Creator of the Universe dressed not in fine robes, but the clothes of the lowly. We celebrate that he is both a King and a Servant. We remember His goodness to us and His victory over the power of death. We remember that He is coming back again:

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands..."

Revelation 7:9

JESSICA ELLERTSON

READ

Jonday

MATTHEW 21:12-22 MARK 11:15-19 LUKE 19:45-48 JOHN 12: 13-17

M O N D A Y

We prayer walked a Hindu temple in Maricopa in 2021. We intended to bring the presence of God into this temple, so people would come to the light of Jesus. We are, as the ark of the covenant in the Old Testament, bringing God's presence wherever we go.

The highlight of the day was a new statue of Vishnu that people came to worship in this Hindu temple, which had just arrived from an Asian country. Three beautiful ladies sat on the floor, a mother with her two college-aged daughters. They were tirelessly making fragrant garlands with the jasmine flowers from their garden. They delicately weaved the tiny jasmine flower buds with a microscopic thread for an entire day. They were waiting for the ceremony to start so they could place the garland on devotion to their god and receive a blessing from this man-made statue.

Right then, God spoke into my heart, "The Only True God created the world, and He does not dwell in a statue, which needs to be carried by planes and propped up by people and adorned by human hands". Yet, these worshippers believed that this statue held supernatural power for healing and life. Sadly, these people are not seeing God as who He is. They gave honor and ascribed worship and power to a manufactured statue.

After His entry into Jerusalem, Jesus stays in the nearby village of Bethany which is where Mary, Martha, and Lazarus lived. The next morning, He returns to Jerusalem. As Jesus returned to Jerusalem, He made a visit to the temple and was very disturbed by what he saw there. Jesus walked into the temple of God and drove out those who bought and sold in the Temple and overturned the tables of the money changers and those who sold doves. He was angry at people turning the house of prayer into a den of thieves.

Jesus defines the House of Prayer as a place for:

- Teaching of God's Word
- Praying for the nations
- Children praising to God
- Healing of the blind and the lame
- Signs, wonders, and miracles at the proclamation of His words

"These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Isaiah 56:7"

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God is on the throne, and He wants to showcase His love, power, goodness, and glory.

A "den of thieves" here is a place where religious activities occur, and some profit from the people who come to worship:

- Buying and selling
- Money changers
- Commercializing animals, such as birds for sacrifice and offerings

"Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, I myself have seen it, declares the Lord"

Jeremiah 7:11

Jeremiah 7:22-24 says this " For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be My people. And walk in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well with you.' Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but followed the counsels and the dictates of their evil hearts, and went backward and not forward."

Just as the people in the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah did not recognize the truth that God cared much more about His people listening to His voice and being His people than the sacrifices of animals, the same was true during Jesus' time. We also need this reminder, which Paul provides to us:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Romans 12:1

In this season of celebration of the Holy week, let us ask ourselves these questions:

a. Do I see God as who He is?

b. Do I serve God or serve the world?

c. Do I love and serve God out of a religious duty or out of a relationship from hearing and obeying His voice daily?



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READ

MATTHEW 21:23-24:51 MARK 11:20-13:37 LUKE 20:1-21:36 JOHN 12:20-38

Did You Know?

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Tuesday is the day that Judas underwent negotiations with the Sanhredin to betray Jesus.

"Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?" And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him." Matthew 26: 14 - 16

The Mount of Olives

Having returned to Bethany the night before, Jesus once again visits the temple in Jerusalem. The religious leaders, having become outraged at Jesus, attempted to have Him arrested. Jesus avoids their traps and then leaves for the Mount of Olives.

At the Mount of Olives, east of the Temple, Jesus overlooks the city of Jerusalem. It is here that He prophesies the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming end of the age.

"Then, as some spoke of the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and donations, He said, "These things which you see—the days will come in which not one stone shall be left upon another that shall not be thrown down." Luke 21: 5-6

Introduction

In the days leading up to dying on the cross, Jesus was constantly motivated by His love for us, and the vision God had for our original design and who we were called to be. Throughout scripture, Jesus consistently speaks about His desires for us to succeed in our everyday life and how we can realize the vision God has for us. From today's reading, I'd like to focus on three practical ways He communicates His vision for our lives, and how we can partner with God's plan to be obedient, stay awake, and endure.

Obedience

When Jesus was at the temple, the leaders approached Him and challenged His authority. In His infinite wisdom, He responds with three parables, one being the parable of the two sons:

"... Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him." Matthew 21:28-32

TUESDAY

While there's much to unpack in this parable, the theme that sticks out to me the most is the obedience of sinners to God. My conclusion of this parable is that sometimes we (sinners) say yes on the surface (our fleshly feelings) but no in our hearts, and other times we say no on the surface but yes in our hearts. For example, my flesh said no when agreeing to do this Lent devotional because I had the fear of failing. However, I said yes in my heart because I knew God wanted me to step out in faith, and I was obedient to what the Lord was asking me to do. Being obedient is oftentimes uncomfortable, but God rewards those who leave their comfort zone and choose to partner with the plan that God has for them.

Fear, pride, and other fleshly emotions can prevent obedience, and cause you to miss out on the rewards God has for you. Obeying God strengthens your relationship with Him and creates a richer spiritual life - simple obedience changes history.

Staying Awake

When Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives with His disciples, He describes the events to come in both the near and distant future. He warns us to stay awake while awaiting His second coming, while also foreshadowing to His disciples the events that are going to take place over the next few days.

Therefore, stay awake - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake."

Mark 13:32-37

TUESDAY

In this scripture, Jesus is encouraging us to be active in our relationship with Him; setting aside time each day enables us to remain "awake". In our walk with Christ, each season of our lives looks slightly different than the previous. For example, I have a 3-year-old and a 6-month-old, so my quiet time with God looks vastly different than it did when I was single doing missionary work in Germany! However, the Lord is so eager to be in relationship with us, regardless of where we are in life, and if our heart posture is to remain focused on Christ because we trust in Him (Isaiah 26:3), the Lord will honor us. My point is, no matter what season we're in, are we taking time in the midst of our day-to-day responsibilities to engage with Him, spending time in the word, prayer and worship? We are encouraged to stay awake (focused on) Him, especially building up to His second coming - be ready and vigilant in your walk with the Lord. It's easier to stay awake if you are continuously in tune with what is on God's heart and remaining in active relationship.

Endurance

"But the one who endures to the end will be saved." Matthew 24:13 (see also Luke 21:19). Jesus talks to His disciples about the signs of end times and mentions that the endurance of their faith will be crucial. Endurance is essential in realizing the vision that God has for our lives. For example, a runner competing in the Seattle Marathon, or a high schooler taking the SATs are both foolish to assume that they can show up to their respective event and succeed without any training. Both must be diligent in expanding their lung/brain capacity so they can achieve their desired outcome. In short, endurance is the sweat & hard work associated with success. When we endure, we come into the greatness that Jesus has called us into. Scripture confirms this:

"...Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Romans 5:3-5

Conclusion

During this Lent season, I would encourage us to align our hearts with the vision that God has for us – to be obedient amidst our discomfort, to stay awake in our relationship with Him, and to remain steadfast through our tribulations; to endure on behalf of His Kingdom.

Self-Reflection

1.) Is there an area of my life where I'm being disobedient?

2.) How am I engaging with God in my day-to-day, regardless of the season I'm in?

3.) When I'm faced with trials and tribulations, what's my initial response? How can I improve?



Scripture doesn't tell us what happened on Wednesday of this week. Based on the fact that Jesus and His disciples would be celebrating Passover the next day, it is possible the day would be one of rest and preparation in Bethany.

Bethany played a significant role in Jesus' last days. In fact, a well-known biblical passage takes place in Bethany:

"And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head. There were some who said to themselves indignantly, 'Why was the ointment wasted like that? For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they scolded her. But Jesus said, "'Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them. But you will not always have me. She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her '"

Mark 14: 3 - 9

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READ

MATTHEW 26:17-75 MARK 14:12-72 LUKE 22:7-62 JOHN 13:1-18:11

THURSDAY

The Weakness of Man

Holy Thursday is the story of the weakness of man.

The gospel authors set the scene with Jesus and the twelve disciples reclining at the table of the Last Supper, where Jesus has miraculously provided both the meal and the house. While eating the Passover meal, Jesus's closest friends listen to his words about the bread and wine of the new covenant, and they respond to Jesus with some bold promises of their own. When Jesus predicts that Peter will deny him, Peter contradicts him: "But Peter insisted emphatically, 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you!' And all the others said the same." (Mark 14:31)

In the next scene, Jesus asks the disciples to keep watch with him as he prays in the garden. This is a vulnerable and intimate request. Jesus is lonely and overwhelmed at the cross looming before him, and he seeks support in his friends, who have just promised to stand by him at any cost. But even though he clearly tells them "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death," (Matthew 26:38), their commitment fails. Not realizing the weight of the moment, the disciples one by one fall asleep. Jesus returns and wakes them. But, still not understanding what is being done on their behalf, they give into the weakness of the flesh and fall asleep again.

THURSDAY

In the garden, Jesus experiences the limitations of his own humanity. He has undertaken the burden of all human sin from the past, present, and future. Before him is the cross. Looking ahead to the suffering that he faces at the hands of Rome and God's wrath, he becomes so overwhelmed that he sweats droplets of blood, and asks that if possible, the cup may pass from him. This moment fulfills scripture, that he would suffer the same things that humans suffer, including dark despair.

And then, in the moment of his great vulnerability, Jesus is betrayed twice: first by his enemies, and then by his friends. Judas sells Jesus to the Jews for thirty pieces of silver – the traditional price of a slave. Although Jesus has taught in the synagogues and conducted his ministry publicly, Judas and the Jews take the road of cowardice even in their moment of strength, coming armed with swords and clubs and prepared for a fight. When they seize Jesus, who does not resist them, the disciples forget their bold promises and abandon Jesus to flee. Only Peter tries to defend his Messiah – and then later, around a campfire with strangers, he vows that he doesn't know Jesus at all.

All through the story, human weakness is on display. Human bodies fall asleep when they should stay awake, human mouths make false promises and betray with a kiss, human minds fail to understand God's purposes, human hearts argue, balk at his commands, and show cowardice when they should stand firm.

This is the story of humanity: we fail.

A God Who Does Not Fail

However, Holy Thursday is also the story of a God who does not fail. Through the pressure and despair that Jesus felt, he was faithful to keep every promise. Any failure in carrying out the Father's will would have disqualified him to act as the lamb of the perfect and final sacrifice for our sins.

On the dawn of Holy Thursday, Jesus was the only one who knew how every event of the day would play out. He invites his disciples into this knowledge, knowing that they won't understand his mission to die on a cross, even though he has prophesied it to them several times. When faced with empty bravado from his disciples, Jesus stands his ground with grace and prays the beautiful high priestly prayer over them. When faced with crisis, Jesus shows bravery. Rather than crumbling under pressure, he resolutely aligns himself with the Father's will, knowing exactly what it will cost him. In the garden, he resists the opportunity to use his supernatural power to escape his unlawful arrest, even defending his attackers from his disciples. He deals calmly with both Peter the betrayer and Judas the betrayer.

He goes bravely to torture, humiliation, and death on our behalf. Nor does he do it reluctantly. The writer of Hebrews says, "Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame" (Hebrews 12:2). Rather than simply tolerating or ignoring human weakness, he overcame it triumphantly, with joy. And the joy set before him was reconciliation with humanity: he did it out of his deep love for us. His heart prevails in his mission to rescue us, though we resist and fail at every point in this story.

Take heart, when you come against your human weakness. The Father knows. He foresaw every time his children would fail him before the foundation of the world, and he still sent his Son willingly. In fact, Jesus became a human man so that he could share in our weaknesses with us; it was the only way to save us. He is our perfect high priest and a mediator between us and the Father. "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." (Hebrews 4:15-16)

Jesus knew about our weakness ahead of time, and he planned for it. When Peter claimed that he would face prison or death without flinching, Jesus gently answered, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." (Luke 22:31) Did you know that Jesus prays on your behalf? Those same prayers for Peter are available for you. His Holy Spirit supports us supernaturally and comes alongside us in our prayers:

"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words,"

Romans 8:26

Instead of being ashamed of human weakness, you are invited to do the opposite: approach the throne of God boldly, because Jesus has paid for your failures. His blood built the road to the throne. When you make Jesus your Lord, you move under the guidance of a perfect savior who never fails. He delights in rescuing you. Neither your past nor the road ahead intimidates him, and your past failures are not big enough to compromise his glorious plans for you.

"But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

2 Corinthians 12:9

Let us partner this Holy Thursday with the founder and perfector of our faith, who never fails.

PASSAGES TO READ MATTHEW 27:1 MARK 15:1-47 LUKE 22:6 3-23:55 JOHN 18:2 8-19:37

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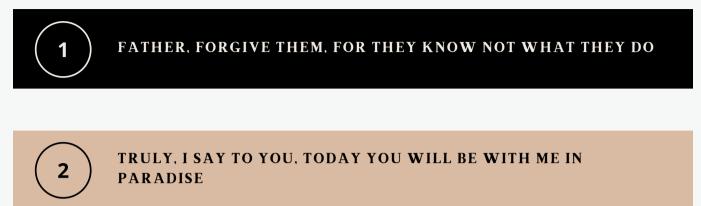
WHAT'S SO GOOD ABOUT GOOD FRIDAY?

The word "good" used to have a much stronger tie to the word "holy" in the English language. This Friday is good because it is holy – it was the day that Jesus became the final, perfect, and blameless sacrifice for our sins. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith." Romans 3: 23 - 25

"And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him." Colossians 2:13 - 15

"Punished with limbs outstretched, they see the stake as their fate; they are fastened and nailed to it in the most bitter torment, evil food for birds of prey and grim pickings for dogs." In the 21st century, it can be difficult for us to fully comprehend the pain and violence of the cross. Yet, Hebrews 12:2 tells us "... Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

THE FINAL STATEMENTS OF CHRIST



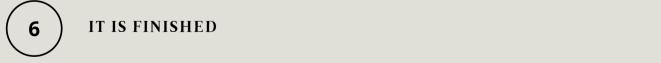


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WOMAN, BEHOLD, YOUR SON!

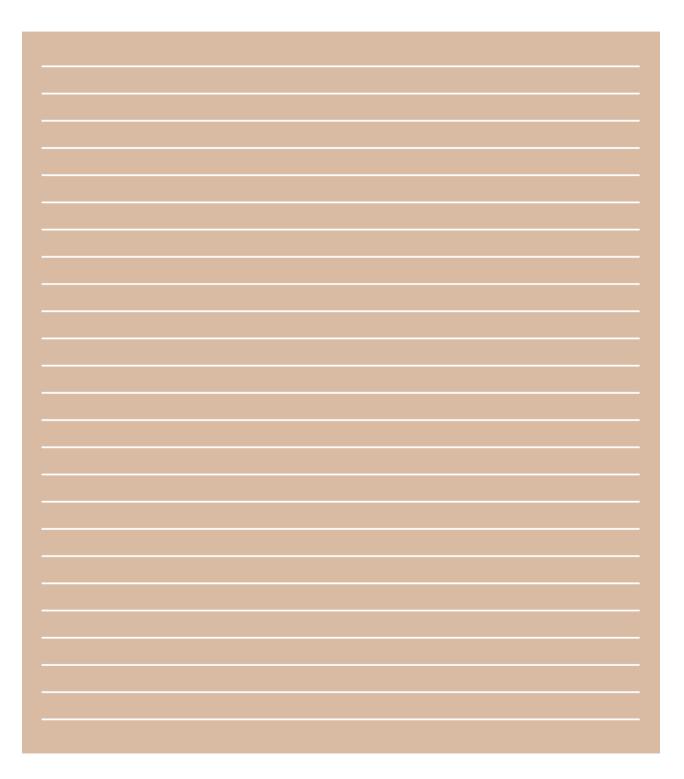






FATHER, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT!

CHOOSE ONE OF JESUS' FINAL STATEMENTS AND REFLECT ON WHAT IT MEANS TO YOU.





READ MATTHEW 16:1 MARK 23:56 LUKE 23:56 JOHN 19:38-40

SABBATH

HOLY SATURDAY IS THE DAY AFTER JESUS' DEATH. FOR JESUS' DISCIPLES, IT WAS BOTH THE SABBATH AND A DAY OF MOURNING.

AT THE TOMB, THE GUARD REMAINED STATIONED TO MAKE SURE THAT THE DISCIPLES DID NOT STEAL JESUS' BODY

MOURNING

JESUS' BODY LAY IN THE TOMB MOST OF THE DAY SATURDAY AS JEWS OBSERVED THE SABBATH. AFTER THE SABBATH CONCLUDED, NICODEMUS AND JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA TREATED JESUS' BODY FOR BURIAL.

PREPARATION

BOTH MEN WERE MEMBERS OF THE SANHEDRIN, THE SAME COUNCIL THAT HAD CONDEMMED JESUS. WHILE THEY HAD NOT AGREED, THEY HAD ALSO NOT SUPPORTED JESUS IN HIS TIME OF NEED. AFTER HIS DEATH, THEY BOTH CAME OUT OF HIDING TO LAY JESUS IN THE TOMB AND, AFTER THE SABBATH ENDED, COMPLETELY PREPARE HIS BODY FOR BURIAL.

SATURDAY

The tomb was sealed. His enemies were triumphant. His followers were grief struck. Silence. Stillness. The tomb was sealed.

In today's scripture reading, we have the advantage over Mary. We know how the story ends. We know how the stone was rolled away. Yet, there are some stories we where we don't know the end. We see sealed tombs in our lives, and we wonder, "How will the stone be rolled away?"

This is a day to remember that God is, in fact, Almighty.

He is the creator. He is the beginning. He is the end. He has the last word.

His timing can be beyond our comprehension. What we feel is the end is His setting for resurrection.

Today, take heart. Remember that God, is in fact, ALMIGHTY.

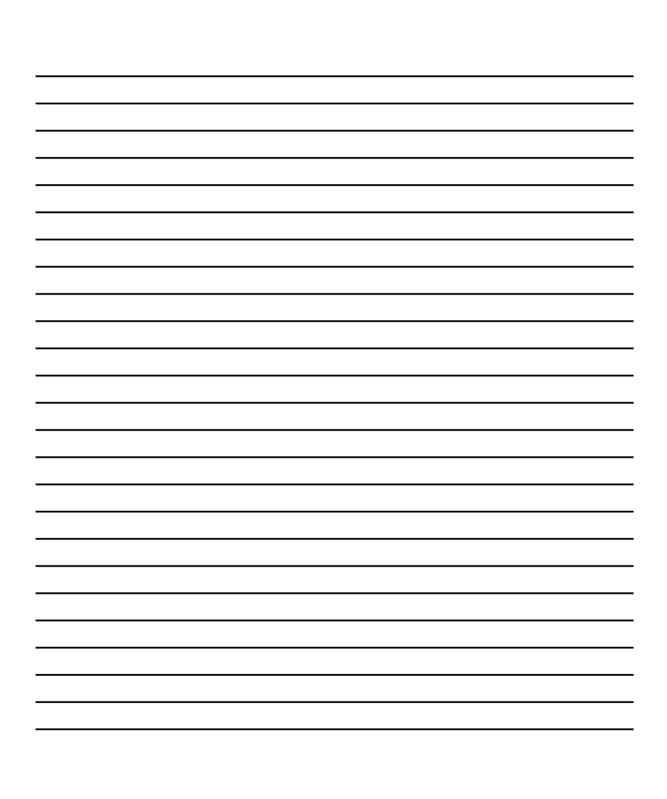
He is in the business of resurrection and restoration.

We place our unfinished stories in His hands, and say, "Come, Lord Jesus, Come."

"The resurrected King, is resurrecting me."

KRISTIN PATTISON

REFLECTION



EASTER SUNDAY

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MATTHEW 28:1-13

MARK 16:1-14

LUKE 24:1-49

JOHN 20:1-23



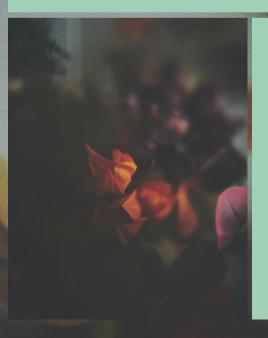
"But the angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay."

Matthew 28:5-6

"I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death. O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting? Compassion is hidden from my eyes."



Hosea 13:14



"O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting? For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ"

1 Corinthians 15:55-56

SUNDAY

"Now late on the Sabbath day, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulcher. And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not; for I know that you seek Jesus, who hath been crucified. He is not here; for he is risen, even as he said."

Mathew 28.1-6

Jesus' body laid in the tomb for three days and three nights as He had prophesied, Late on the Sabbath day Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James and Salome went to the Tomb and an angel appeared to them and told them that Jesus was no longer in the tomb because He had risen.

The resurrection is at the very heart the Gospel for without the resurrection Jesus' story ends in defeat.

"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."

1 Corinthians 15:3-41

HECTOR TORRES

SUNDAY

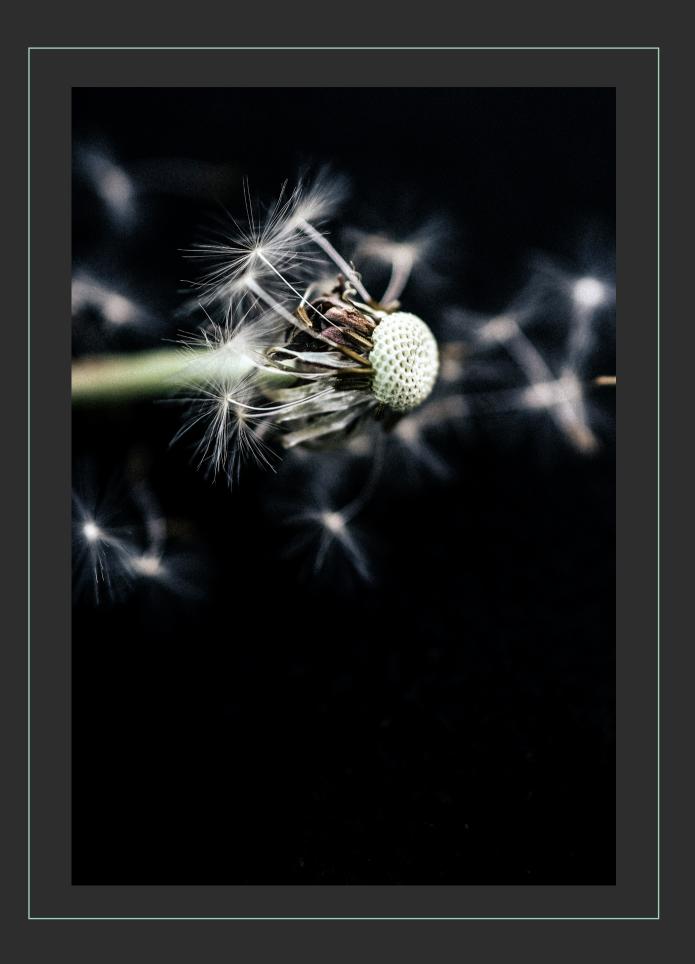
Later in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul tells us that without the resurrection, our faith is vain. if Jesus did not actually rise from the dead, then He has not overcome the power of death. If there is no resurrection, then we can't trust Jesus who himself declared that he would be raised from the dead. The resurrection is wonderful news indeed!

He then appears to his disciples but Luke 21:12-17 tells us that . . ." their eyes were kept from recognizing him."

The blindness of the disciples was caused by the fact that they did not comprehend that the prophecy of the coming King would also include the suffering Savior. (Isaiah 52.13-53.12). In Emmaus the disciples' eyes are opened and they recognize Jesus. Luke reports how Jesus reveals the meaning of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him and the resurrection becomes a new perspective of an Old Testament truth.

After promising another Helper that would come to help His followers, Jesus shares the Great Commission, (Mathew 28.16-20) to disciple nations. The disciples trusted in the power given to them by the Lord begin to carry out His calling to be witnesses of His death, burial and resurrection.

HECTOR TORRES



"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

