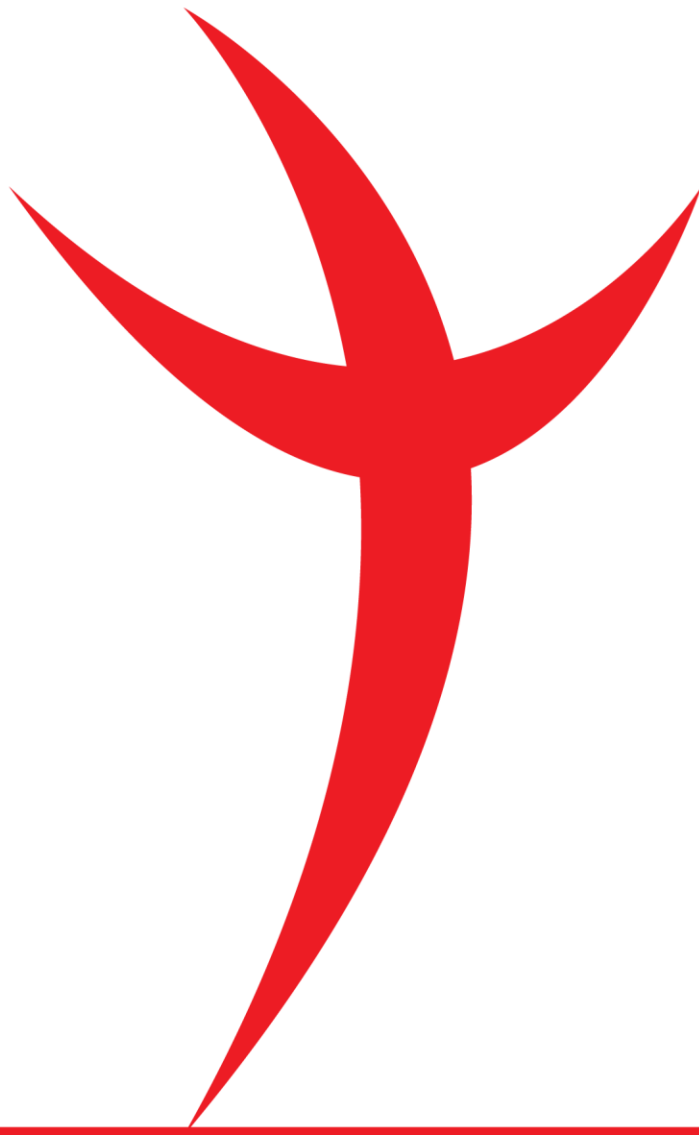


CONNECT 7

DAILY DEVOTIONS



Opposition
to the
cross

February 21 – March 28
Sundays in Lent Sermon Series

Opposition to the Cross

Tagline: The cross is foolishness to many people.

For the **foolishness** of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 1 Corinthians 1:25

Sunday, February 21

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: John the Baptizer – Mark 1:14

Readings: Genesis 22:1-18, Psalm 25:1-10, James 1:12-18, Mark 1:9-15

Sunday, February 28

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: An Easier Way –Peter - Mark 8:33

Readings: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22:23-31, Romans 5:1-11, Mark 8:27-38

Sunday, March 7

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Profit - Moneychangers- John 2:14

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, John 2:13-22

Sunday, March 14

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Nonsensical – Nicodemus - John 3:4

Readings: Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 107:1-9, Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:14-21

Sunday, March 21

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Fear – 12 Disciples Mark 10:32

Readings: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 119:9-16, Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 10: 35-45

Sunday, March 28

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Unbelief – Crowds of People John 12:36-37

Readings: Zechariah 9:9-12, Psalm 118:19-29, Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-15:47

Sunday, April 4

Theme: Easter Sunday

Readings: Exodus 15:1-11, Psalm 118:15-29, 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8, John 20:1-18

Redemption – A Love Story

Tagline: God in His infinite Love spares no cost to buy us back from sin.

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree” —

Galatians 3:13

Theme Hymn: ***There is a Redeemer***

Midweek Lenten Service

February 17 - March 17

Wednesday, February 17 – Ash Wednesday – Holy Communion

Redemption: A Strange Romance - Hosea 3:1-5

Wednesday, February 24 – Midweek 1

Redemption: A Prodigal Love - Luke 15:11-32

Passion Story: Mark 14:1-21

Wednesday, March 3 – Midweek 2

Redemption: A Broken Pot - Jeremiah 18:1-6

Passion Story: Mark 14:22-31, 66-72

Wednesday, March 10 – Midweek 3

Redemption: A Family Devotion - Ruth 4:13-17

Passion Story: Mark 14:32-42

Wednesday, March 17 – Midweek 4

Redemption: A Thief Rescued - Luke 23:32-43

Passion Story: Mark 14:43-52

Wednesday, March 24 – Midweek 5

Redemption: His Only Son - Genesis 22

Passion Story: Mark 14:53-65

April 1 – Maundy Thursday – Holy Communion

Redemption: The Passion of Passover - Exodus 12:1-14

April 2 – Good Friday

Redemption: The Seven Words from the Cross

April 4 – Easter – Sunrise 7 am – Festival 10 am

Connecting to Worship: February 21

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Persecution - John the Baptizer – Mark 1:14

Readings: Genesis 22:1-18, Psalm 25:1-10, James 1:12-18, Mark 1:9-15

Persecution That Backfired

Monday February 15, 2020

Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example,
that you should follow His steps. —

1 Peter 2:21

Today's Scripture:

1 Peter 2:18-25

In AD 64, someone set fire to Rome. A few days later, two-thirds of the city lay in smoldering ruins. A rumor spread that the emperor Nero had set the fire because he wanted to rebuild the city and name it after himself. Needing a scapegoat to get himself off the proverbial hot-seat, he chose to blame a defenseless and unpopular minority—Christians. He then initiated such intense persecution that he's been referred to as the first Antichrist. It's believed that both Peter and Paul were martyred during this time.

Because Christianity was new and its followers still relatively few, the sadistic treatment that Nero leveled against believers, which included using them as human torches to light his palace garden, continued with little opposition.

His persecution eventually backfired, however. Instead of weakening the new faith, it strengthened it. History tells us that within a few hundred years Christianity became so influential that Emperor Constantine made it the official religion of the Roman Empire.

God always has a purpose in persecution. He will use it for good if we follow the example of Christ, who, “when He suffered, He . . . committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

By: [Julie Ackerman Link](#)

Reflect & Pray

**The purposes of God are right,
Although we may not see
Just how He works all things for good
And transforms tragedy. —Sper**

*It is better to suffer for the cause of Christ than for
the cause of Christ to suffer.*

We Can Trust Him

Tuesday February 16, 2020

Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who . . . persecute you. —

Matthew 5:44

Matthew 10:32-38

I know very little about persecution. My physical well-being has never been threatened because of what I believe or what I say. What little I “know” about the subject comes from what I hear and read. But that is not true for many of our brothers and sisters around the world. Some of them live in danger every day simply because they love Jesus and want others to know Him too.

There is another form of persecution that may not be life-threatening, but it is heartbreaking. It’s the persecution that comes from non-Christian family members. When loved ones ridicule our faith and mock us for what we believe and how we express our love for God, we feel rejected and unloved.

Paul warned believers that following Jesus would result in persecution: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12), and we know that sometimes rejection will come from those we love (Matt. 10:34-36). But when people we love reject the God we love, the rejection feels personal.

Jesus told us to pray for those who persecute us (Matt. 5:44), and that includes more than strangers who hate us. God is able to give us grace to persevere through persecution even when it comes from those we love.

By: **Julie Ackerman Link**

Reflect & Pray

Lord, give us grace to pray for those
Who seek our harm and not our good;
And teach us how to show them love
In ways that will be understood. —Sper
People may mock our message but they can’t stop
our prayers.

Free Compliments

Wednesday February 17, 2020

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones. —

Proverbs 16:24

Today's Scripture:

Proverbs 16:20-30

During a time of economic crisis and depressing news, two students at Purdue University decided to lift the spirits of people on campus with some encouraging words. For two hours every Wednesday afternoon, Cameron Brown and Brett Westcott stood along a busy walkway holding a large “Free Compliments” sign and saying nice things to everyone who passed by. “I like your red coat.” “Cool snow boots.” “Very nice smile.” Some students said they deliberately walked past “the compliment guys” every Wednesday just to hear a kind word.

I was struck by these two young men who looked at people with the goal of commending them, rather than finding fault or being critical. Is that how I, as a follower of Christ, view others each day?

Instead of being like the person who is focused on evil and whose speech is “like a burning fire” (Prov. 16:27), we can take a different approach, knowing that what we say begins deep inside us. “The heart

of the wise teaches his mouth, and adds learning to his lips. Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones” (vv.23-24).

Kind words may be free, but they give a priceless lift of spirit. Why not encourage someone today?

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

The power in words can build up or tear down—
Create a big smile or produce a sad frown; So in all
your contacts with people each day, Be sure to
encourage in all that you say. —Fitzhugh
A gentle word of compliment falls lightly but it
carries great weight.

No Laughing Matter

Thursday February 18, 2020

All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. —

2 Timothy 3:12

Philippians 1:12-20

As my wife and I were walking through a shopping mall, we came to a T-shirt stand. While browsing the shirts and their often humorous sayings, I noticed one with a disturbing message. It read, “So Many Christians, So Few Lions.” That shirt, with its reference to the first-century practice of throwing Christians to the lions in the Coliseum in Rome, wasn’t at all funny.

Persecution is no laughing matter. Not long before those brave Christians faced death in Rome’s cruel sport, Paul wrote, “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). Persecution is inevitable, and it should be a matter of serious concern for all believers. In fact, at this very moment fellow brothers and sisters in Christ around the world are suffering in Jesus’ name.

What can we do about it? First, we can pray that God will comfort them in their suffering. Second, we can aid families left without support when loved ones are imprisoned. Third, we can pray now for courage should we face persecution. When the apostle Paul was put in jail for his faith, his courage led others to be bolder in their witness (Phil. 1:14).

Want to encourage the persecuted church? Pray. Then proclaim the message for which believers suffer.

By: **Bill Crowder**

Reflect & Pray

The church of Christ can’t be destroyed, Though many enemies have tried; Whenever persecution comes, The church is spread and multiplied. —Sper
We find courage to stand when we kneel before the Lord.

Never Give Up!

Friday February 19, 2020

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

2 Timothy 4:7

Today's Scripture & Insight: 2 Timothy 3:10–15

Joop Zoetemelk is known as the Netherlands' most successful cyclist. But that's because he never gave up. He started and finished the Tour de France 16 times—placing second five times before winning in 1980. That's perseverance!

Many winners have reached success by climbing a special ladder called “never give up.” However, there are also many who have lost the opportunity to achieve success because they gave up too soon. This can happen in every area of life: family, education, friends, work, service. Perseverance is a key to victory.

The apostle Paul persevered despite persecution and affliction (2 Tim. 3:10–11). He viewed life with realism, recognizing that as followers of Christ we will suffer persecution (vv. 12–13), but he instructed Timothy to place his faith in God and the encouragement of the Scriptures (vv. 14–15). Doing so would help him face discouragement and endure with hope. At the end of his life, Paul said,

“I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (4:7).

We too can allow the Scriptures to strengthen us to press on in the race marked out for us. For our God is both a promise-making and promise-keeping God and will reward those who faithfully finish the race (v. 8).

By: **Jaime Fernández Garrido**

Reflect & Pray

Heavenly Father, give me strength of character and perseverance to serve you better. Help me not to get discouraged when things get tough but to rely on You to see me through.

Faith connects our weakness to God's strength.

Connecting to Worship: February 21
Theme: Opposition to the Cross: John the Baptizer – Mark 1:14
Readings: Genesis 22:1-18, Psalm 25:1-10, James 1:12-18, Mark 1:9-15

Connecting to Worship: February 28

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: An Easier Way – Peter - Mark 8:33

Readings: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22:23-31, Romans 5:1-11, Mark 8:27-38

It's Not A Game

Monday February 22, 2020

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. —

Mark 8:34

Today's Scripture:

Mark 8:31-38

My former neighbor often talked about “the game of life,” and I can understand why he did. It’s part of human nature to approach life as one big game made up of a lot of little games. Competing can be fun, exciting, and stimulating.

But life is a whole lot more than a game—especially for a follower of Jesus Christ. When a believer needs to own the biggest house, drive the largest SUV, get the promotion first, and win every argument, something’s terribly wrong from God’s point of view. It’s not right to run over people’s feelings, bend or break the rules, and gloat over victories.

To approach life as one big game that you always have to win is to live in hopeless delusion and fantasy. While material possessions, professional success, and personal victories are enjoyable, they last only for this life. Then they’re all left behind.

Jesus instructed His disciples to deny themselves, identify with His cross, and follow Him in self-denial, and for some that even meant death (Mark 8:34-35). He made it clear to His disciples that artificial victories in “the game of life” don’t count for much. What really counts is what’s done for the Lord.

By: David C. Egner

Who And How

Tuesday February 23, 2020

You are the Christ. —

Mark 8:29

Today's Scripture: Mark 8:27-33

Whenever I read the Gospels, I identify with the disciples. Like me, they seemed slow to catch on. Jesus kept saying things like “Don’t you understand it yet?” and “Are you still so dull?” (see Mark 7:18). Finally, however, Peter “got it,” at least one part of it. When Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” Peter answered, “You are the Christ” (8:29).

Peter was right about the “who”—Jesus—but he was still wrong about the “how.” When Jesus predicted His death, Peter rebuked Him for it. Jesus, in turn, rebuked Peter: “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men” (v.33).

Peter was still thinking in human ways of establishing kingdoms. One ruler would overthrow another and set up a new government. He was expecting Jesus to do the same. But Christ’s kingdom was going to come in a new way—through service and the sacrifice of His life.

The method God uses today hasn’t changed. Whereas Satan’s voice tempts us to gain power, the voice of Jesus tells us that the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). To gain citizens for God’s

kingdom, we must follow the example of Jesus, who set aside selfish ambitions, served others, and called people to repent of their sin.

By: **Julie Ackerman Link**

Reflect & Pray

We say we love humanity, But can we really claim
A readiness to sacrifice For them in Jesus’ name? —

Sper

A Christian is an ambassador who speaks for the
King of kings.

True Self-Denial

Wednesday February 24, 2020

If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.

- [Luke 9:23](#)

Today's Scripture:

[Luke 9:18-25](#)

Lent is a period of 40 days prior to Easter (excluding Sundays). For many people it commemorates Jesus' fasting in the wilderness. They "give up something" for Lent every year, like sweets or TV. This can yield spiritual benefits, but denying yourself *things* and denying *yourself* aren't the same. In [Luke 9:23](#), Jesus taught the latter.

This verse can be broken down into three parts. In the statement "If anyone desires to come after Me," the word *desires* indicates that this is for sincere disciples only. In the phrase "let him deny himself," the words *let* and *denyhimself* imply a willingness to renounce one's selfish will and ways. And in the statement "take up his cross daily," the word *daily* emphasizes a continual dying to self-will.

It's easier to give things than to give ourselves. Yet Jesus gave Himself, and so must we. To those who deny themselves in obedient service, He has promised, "Whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" (v.24). And to His question, "What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed?" we are called to answer,

"There is no profit!" We show that we believe this when we deny ourselves and follow Christ.

By: **Joanie Yoder**

Reflect & Pray

To follow Christ we must let go
Of all that we hold dear;
And as we do deny ourselves,
Our gains become more clear. —Sper

*By living for ourselves we die; by dying to ourselves
we live.*

Follow Me

Thursday February 25, 2020

Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. —

Mark 8:34

Today's Scripture:

Mark 8:34-38

During World War II, B-17 bombers made long flights from the US mainland to the Pacific island of Saipan. When they landed there, the planes were met by a jeep bearing the sign: “Follow Me!” That little vehicle guided the giant planes to their assigned places in the parking area.

One pilot, who by his own admission was not a religious man, made an insightful comment: “That little jeep with its quaint sign always reminds me of Jesus. He was [a lowly] peasant, but the giant men and women of our time would be lost without His direction.”

Centuries after our Savior walked the streets and hills of Israel, the world with all its advances still needs His example and instruction. When His ways aren't followed, numerous problems and evils arise in our world—including immorality, crime, and greed.

How do we follow Jesus' ways? First of all, we turn from our sin and entrust our lives to Him as our Savior and Lord. Then, we seek His will in His Word each day and put it into practice by the power of the Holy Spirit within us. We learn to deny our

selfish desires and give ourselves completely to following Jesus (Mark 8:34-35).

If you want to get in line with the purposes of God, respond to Jesus' invitation: “Follow Me!”

By: **Vernon Grounds**

Reflect & Pray

THINKING IT OVER

**For help on your Christian journey,
read the online booklet *What Does It Take To
Follow Christ?***

To find your way through life, follow Jesus.

The Cross

Friday February 26, 2020

God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. — [Galatians 6:14](#)

Today's Scripture: [Colossians 1:9-23](#)

Centuries before Jesus was born, the cross had been used as an instrument of torture and death. In 519 bc, for example, King Darius I of Persia crucified 3,000 political enemies in Babylon. This method of execution was later adopted by the Romans for noncitizens and slaves.

When Jesus Christ bore our sins at Calvary ([1 Peter 2:24](#)), the cross took on a new significance. There the Savior, “through the blood of His cross,” made it possible for us to escape judgment and be reconciled to God ([Colossians 1:20-21](#)).

The apostle Paul understood the significance of the cross. He had done many things in which he might have found personal satisfaction and pride ([2 Corinthians 11:16-12:13](#)). But in his letter to the Galatians he wrote, “God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:14). As we understand what Jesus did for us on the cross, we too will be humbled. Our feeble efforts are nothing; His work is everything!

The resurrected Savior invites all men and women to come humbly in faith to Him. By believing that He died in our place on the cross, we receive full forgiveness.

No wonder the hymnwriter Horatius Bonar exclaimed, “Hallelujah for the cross!”

By: **Henry G. Bosch**

Reflect & Pray

**So round the cross we sing
Of Christ our offering,
Of Christ our living King,
Hallelujah for the cross! —Bonar**

The cross of Christ is the bridge between God and man.

Connecting to Worship: February 28

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: An Easier Way – Peter - Mark 8:33

Readings: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16, Psalm 22:23-31, Romans 5:1-11, Mark 8:27-38

Connecting to Worship: March 7

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Profit - Moneychangers- John 2:14

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, John 2:13-22

Garbage In The Temple

Monday March 1, 2020

Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? — 1 Corinthians 6:19

Today's Scripture:

John 2:13-22

A number of years ago, a government investigation discovered that some truckers were hauling garbage in the same refrigerated trucks that were used to transport food. Part of the problem was that trucks making long trips could not afford to return empty.

According to the truckers, some considered garbage a dream commodity. They were paid to transport something that couldn't be damaged. During congressional hearings, a food science professor likened the problem to serving potato salad from a cat's litter box.

This "pollution for profit" scandal is nothing compared to the one described in John 2:13-22. Jesus cast out the money changers from the temple because their schemes for financial gain had desecrated His Father's house. But just as bad is polluting the temple of our bodies with thoughts

and practices that don't belong there (1 Corinthians 6:19).

In many ways, we are no better than those truckers or the temple merchants of Jesus' day. We think it would be more profitable for us to carry the garbage of this world's values in our minds. May God forgive us, cleanse us, and help us to cast out everything that defiles the temple in which He alone has the right to dwell. —MRD II

By: **Mart DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

Lord, help us love what's good and right—

O make us pure within;

And give us courage to repent

When we would choose to sin. —D. De Haan

Christians must live in the world, but not let the world live in them.

Meeting God In Church

Tuesday March 2, 2020

Do you not know that you are the temple of God
and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

1 Corinthians 3:16

Today's Scripture:

1 Kings 8:26-36

The phone rang in the office of the Washington church where the President of the United States attended. The caller asked, "Do you expect the President to be there Sunday?"

"I can't say," replied the pastor. "But we do expect God, and that should be incentive enough for a reasonably large attendance."

In the Old Testament, God associated Himself in a special way with the temple. Solomon said that not even the highest heaven could contain God, let alone the temple he had built (1 Ki. 8:27). Yet he asked God to identify Himself with the temple so that when an Israelite prayed "toward this place," God would hear and answer the prayer (v.30).

That ancient temple of stone has been replaced in this age by one of flesh—the church, which is called the body of Christ (1 Cor. 3:16-17), and is made up of all believers. Wherever Christ's followers gather to learn more about Him and to do His will, God's presence is assured (Mt. 18:20; 28:20).

So when we go to church, we can expect to meet God not because God lives in the building but because we are His temple. We meet the Lord as we allow His Spirit to speak to us through the teaching of His Word, as we encourage one another, and as we lift our hearts in worship.

By: **Dennis J. DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

**All people that on earth do dwell,
Sing to the Lord with cheerful voice;
Him serve with fear, His praise forth-tell,
Come ye before Him and rejoice. —Kethe**

*You can quickly lose interest in worship if you have
nothing invested.*

Pure Worship

Wednesday March 3, 2020

My house will be called a house of prayer.

Mark 11:17

Today's Scripture & Insight:

Mark 11:15–18

Jose pastored a church known for its programs and theatrical productions. They were well done, yet he worried the church's busyness had slipped into a business. Was the church growing for the right reasons or because of its activities? Jose wanted to find out, so he canceled all extra church events for one year. His congregation would focus on being a living temple where people worshiped God.

Jose's decision seems extreme, until you notice what Jesus did when He entered the temple's outer courts. The holy space that should have been full of simple prayers had become a flurry of worship business. "Get your doves here! Lily white, as God requires!" Jesus overturned the merchant's tables and stopped those who bought their merchandise. Furious at what they were doing, He quoted Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7: " 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.' But you have made it 'a den of robbers'" (Mark 11:17). The court of the gentiles, the place for outsiders to worship God, had been turned into a mundane marketplace for making money.

There's nothing wrong with business or staying busy. But that's not the point of church. We're the

living temple of God, and our main task is to worship Jesus. We likely won't need to flip over any tables as Jesus did, but He may be calling us to do something equally drastic.

By: **Mike Wittmer**

Reflect & Pray

Why do you attend church and meet with believers? What expectations of yours might you need to let the Spirit change?

Father, show us where our expectations of worship fail to please You. Help us see that it's all about You.

All Generations

Thursday March 4, 2020

Old men who had seen the first temple wept with a loud voice. — [Ezra 3:12](#)

Today's Scripture:
[Ezra 3:8-13](#)

I'm trying. I really am. I'm trying to enjoy my teenage son's musical tastes. Steve's preferred style of worship music is different from what I would choose, but our goal is the same. Even though our two generations have different musical preferences at home and in church, we both share the goal of using music to praise the Lord.

This reminds me of something that happened in the 6th century BC when Zerubbabel began rebuilding the temple after the Israelites returned from captivity ([Ezra 3:8-13](#)). As soon as the foundation for the new temple was laid, "all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord" (v.11). But then, while the younger generation rejoiced (vv.10-11), the older generation cried (v.12).

Why the two reactions? The young crowd had never seen the glorious temple of Solomon, so they were happy with what they saw being built. The older people realized this temple wouldn't be anything like the one they remembered, so their praise was mixed with sorrow.

One heart for God. Two ways to react. Generations do that sometimes. Let's thank God with a heart of

praise—even though we may express it differently. —JDB

By: **Dave Branon**

Reflect & Pray

**Both young and old can join in praise,
Although expressed in different ways;
One heart they lift to God above
In gratitude for His great love. —D. De Haan**

There are many ways to express God's praise.

Remember!

Friday March 5, 2020

When He had risen from the dead, His disciples remembered . . . and they believed the Scripture.

— John 2:22

Today's Scripture:

John 2:13-22

The disciples remembered—and then they believed. After the death of Jesus on the cross and His resurrection, they recalled and finally understood Jesus' words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19).

If our faith is to grow, we too need to remember the cross and the empty tomb. Jesus established a memorial of His death, a practice we call the Lord's Supper, knowing that our faith and hope would be strengthened as we remember what He has done for us. He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (1 Corinthians 11:24). Every time we meet to drink of the cup and eat the bread, we remember what it cost Him to redeem us.

The true believer does not live in memories only, however, but with hope for the future. We are to partake of the cup and bread "till He comes" (v.26). The One who died for us also rose from the grave. As we think of our loved ones who have died in the faith, we look beyond to the day when the graves will be opened and we will meet them again. We can be sure that because Jesus lives we too shall live.

We may shed tears today in memory of those who have died. But as we recall Christ's death and resurrection, our faith and hope are renewed. Let's remember!

By: **M.R. DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

**We sorrow not as others do,
Whose hopes fade like the flowers;
There is a hope that's born of God,
And such a hope is ours. —McNeil**

In life and in death, Christ is our hope.

Connecting to Worship: March 7

**Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Profit -
Moneychangers- John 2:14**

Readings: Exodus 20:1-17, Psalm 19, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, John 2:13-22

Connecting to Worship: March 14

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Nonsensical – Nicodemus - John 3:4

Readings: Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 107:1-9, Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:14-21

The Midwife's Tale

Monday March 8, 2020

The wind blows where it wishes . . . So is everyone
who is born of the Spirit. —

John 3:8

Today's Scripture:

John 3:1-8

Historian Laurel Ulrich received a Pulitzer Prize for her book *The Midwife's Tale*. The book was based on the diary of Martha Ballard, who lived during the American Revolution. Martha was a midwife who traveled by canoe, horse, or sometimes on foot to assist women in delivering their babies. At a time when many women died in childbirth, Martha's track record was extraordinary. In more than 1,000 deliveries, she never lost a mother in childbirth.

In God's kingdom, there is a spiritual Helper who produces new life. But His role is to bring about "second birth" (John 3:5-8). The Holy Spirit uses a variety of ways to accomplish this. He convicts the world of sin (John 16:8), empowers the gospel (1 Thess. 1:5), regenerates us from within (Titus 3:5), and places believers into eternal union with Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-13). Though He is invisible, His life-changing activity can be clearly seen.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit: "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

The Spirit desires to use us in sharing the gospel so others can experience that second birth.

By: **Dennis Fisher**

Reflect & Pray

**God sent the Holy Spirit after
Christ ascended from this earth,
And this we know—He's left us here
To share good news of second birth. —Hess**

The Holy Spirit is the Christian's source of power.

Nic At Nite

Tuesday March 9, 2020

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. —

John 12:46

Today's Scripture:

John 3:1-21

According to the apostle John, Nicodemus “came to Jesus by night” (John 3:2). Was this Pharisee skulking under cover of darkness, embarrassed or ashamed that he, as one of the ruling class, was curious about Jesus?

Some have suggested that it was just cooler at night. Others have said that evening was a better time to ask Jesus questions because it was quieter and there were fewer distractions.

We really don't know the reason Nicodemus went to Jesus at night, but John seemed determined to make a point of that specific fact. Every time he mentioned Nicodemus, he identified him by saying something like: “You know who I'm talking about—the guy who came to Jesus by night” (see 7:50; 19:39).

Nicodemus, no doubt, was quite moral and lived according to Mosaic Law. People probably thought he was a pretty good person. Yet none of that mattered. He was in the dark about who Jesus really was, and he wanted to know the truth. So he

was drawn from the darkness into the presence of “the light of the world” (John 8:12).

Jesus calls us “out of darkness” too (1 Peter 2:9) and promises that whoever believes in Him will not stay in the dark (John 12:46).

By: **Cindy Hess Kasper**

Reflect & Pray

**Our search for truth is hindered by
The darkness of the night,
Until the Bright and Morning Star
Reveals His brilliant light. —Sper**

*Faith in Christ is not a leap into the dark; it's a step
into the Light.*

"Retronyms"

Wednesday March 10, 2020

Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." — [John 3:7](#)

Today's Scripture:

[John 3:1-17](#)

What do regular coffee, acoustic guitars, and black-and-white television have in common? All are what journalist Frank Mankiewicz calls "retronyms" — words or phrases created because a familiar word needs to be distinguished from a term that refers to a new development or invention.

Once, all coffee was regular, all guitars were acoustic, and all TVs were black and white. Not so today, thus the need for a growing list of retronyms, including *decaf mocha java*, *electric guitar*, and *high-def television*.

It could be said that Jesus turned the phrase *physical birth* into a retronym when He told an inquiring man named Nicodemus, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" ([John 3:3](#)).

Nicodemus was a religious person who didn't grasp the idea of second birth. "How can a man be born when he is old?" he asked Jesus. "Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (v.4). Jesus further explained the difference between being born of the flesh and being born of

the Spirit, then concluded, "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again'" (v.7).

Our Christian life begins when we invite Jesus to live within us. It's a miracle! We're born again.

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

**Rejoice, O soul, the debt is paid,
For all our sins on Christ were laid;
We've been redeemed, we're justified—
And all because the Savior died. —D. De Haan**

*Natural life came by God's breath; eternal life
comes by Christ's death.*

Changed Lives Are Possible

Thursday March 11, 2020

Do not marvel that I said to you, "You must be born again." — John 3:7

Today's Scripture:

John 3:1-16

Lord Kenneth Clark, internationally known for his television series *Civilization*, lived and died without faith in Jesus Christ. In his autobiography, he wrote about an overwhelming religious experience he had while visiting a beautiful church.

"My whole being," Clark wrote, "was irradiated by a kind of heavenly joy far more intense than anything I had known before." Unfortunately, the "flood of grace," as he described it, created a problem for him. If he allowed himself to be influenced by it, he knew he would have to change. His family might think he had lost his mind. Or perhaps the intense joy would prove to be an illusion. So he concluded, "I was too deeply embedded in the world to change course."

What a tragedy! If only he had responded to that grace-granted glimpse of another world! If only he had allowed it to turn his attention away from this world and toward Jesus! Then he would have become a part of that invisible world, which is not an illusion but a glorious reality.

God can enable any of us to change, no matter how deeply embedded we may be in this world. The

miracle of the new birth (John 3:5-7) will take place when we say yes to the stirring of God's grace in our souls.

By: **Vernon Grounds**

Reflect & Pray

**The Savior is waiting to save you
And cleanse every sin-stain away;
By faith you can know full forgiveness
And be a new creature today! —Bosch**

Salvation is not reformation but transformation.

God So Loved . . .

Friday March 12, 2020

Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” [Luke 23:34](#)

Today's Scripture & Insight: John 3:13-19

July 28, 2014, marked the 100th anniversary of the beginning of World War I. In the British media many discussions and documentaries recalled the start of that 4-year conflict. Even the TV program *Mr. Selfridge*, which is based on an actual department store in London, included an episode set in 1914 that showed young male employees lining up to volunteer for the army. As I observed these portrayals of self-sacrifice, I felt a lump in my throat. The soldiers they depicted had been so young, so eager, and so unlikely to return from the horror of the trenches.

Although Jesus didn't go off to war to defeat an earthly foe, He did go to the cross to defeat the ultimate enemy—sin and death. Jesus came to earth to demonstrate God's love in action and to die a horrendous death so that we could be forgiven of our sins. And He was even prepared to forgive the men who flogged and crucified Him ([Luke 23:34](#)). He conquered death by His resurrection and now we can become part of God's forever family ([John 3:13-16](#)).

Anniversaries and memorials remind us of important historical events and heroic deeds. The

cross reminds us of the pain of Jesus' death and the beauty of His sacrifice for our salvation.

By: **Marion Stroud**

Reflect & Pray

Dear Lord, thank You for loving me so much that You left Your home in heaven, came to earth, and willingly went to the cross for me. Thank You for paying the penalty for my sins and forgiving me.

The cross of Jesus is the supreme evidence of the love of God. Oswald Chambers

Connecting to Worship: March 14

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Nonsensical – Nicodemus - John 3:4

Readings: Numbers 21:4-9, Psalm 107:1-9, Ephesians 2:1-10, John 3:14-21

Connecting to Worship: March 21

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Fear – 12 Disciples Mark 10:32

Readings: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 119:9-16, Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 10: 35-45

True Greatness

Monday March 15, 2020

Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. — [Mark 10:43](#)

Today's Scripture:

[Mark 10:35-45](#)

Some people feel like a small pebble lost in the immensity of the Grand Canyon. But no matter how insignificant we judge ourselves to be, we can be greatly used by God.

In a sermon early in 1968, Martin Luther King Jr. quoted Jesus' words from [Mark 10](#) about servanthood. Then he said, "Everybody can be great, because everybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve. You don't have to know about Plato and Aristotle to serve. . . . You only need a heart full of grace, a soul generated by love."

When Jesus' disciples quarreled about who would get the places of honor in heaven, He told them: "Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and

to give His life a ransom for many" ([Mark 10:43-45](#)).

I wonder about us. Is that our understanding of greatness? Are we gladly serving, doing tasks that may be unnoticed? Is the purpose of our serving to please our Lord, rather than to gain the applause of people? If we are willing to be a servant, we can achieve true greatness.

By: **Vernon Grounds**

Reflect & Pray

*No service in itself is small,
None great, though earth it fill;
But that is small that seeks its own,
And great that does God's will. —Anon.*

Little things done in Christ's name are great things.

Remembering The Reason

Tuesday March 16, 2020

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. — Mark 10:45

Today's Scripture:

Mark 10:35-45

Joe Morris flavors his ice cream with ingredients ranging from chocolate and strawberries to green tea and dried chipotle peppers. He's one of three ice-cream makers for a successful Texas company known for its quality, creativity, and innovation. But Joe hasn't forgotten why he does it.

He told reporter Ricardo Gándara that one of the longtime employees always reminded them, "Why are we making ice cream? It's a happy food. We're here to make people happy." And that's why Joe Morris makes ice cream.

We know that it's extremely important to remember the reason for what we do as followers of Jesus. If we forget, we become like the disciples when a dispute over who was most important created anger and division among them. Jesus reminded them that "even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:35-45).

If our goal is to share the good news of God's love with others, we won't become impersonal or harsh if someone resists or ridicules our appeal. As we follow our Lord's path of loving service and

sacrifice, we are reminded that He came to serve and save.

That's the reason for everything we do.

By: David C. McCasland

Reflect & Pray

He whose right was heaven's glory
Chose to serve on earth below,
Leaving us a clear example
Of the love He'd have us show. —D. De Haan
Keep your eyes on the Lord, and you won't lose
sight of life's purpose.

Imperfect Leaders

Wednesday March 17, 2020

Our sufficiency is from God. — 2 Corinthians 3:5

Today's Scripture:

2 Corinthians 3:1-5

God's ways are not our ways. We tend to equate leadership with lordship; He equates leadership with servanthood. We want strength so we can help God with His work; He makes us weak so He can demonstrate His power. We advertise our credentials so others can be more sure of us; He lets us fail so they can see that apart from God we're not much at all.

We are inclined to focus on personalities, to be impressed by the intellect, education, and strength of a leader's will. Followers begin to believe that a particular leader can do no wrong. Such adulation, however, is nothing more than humanism—making a human being the measure of all things. What's worse, it's idolatry—centering our devotion on someone other than God.

So God lets leaders fall off their pedestal. Failure, indecision, and underachievement bring them to a humbling realization of their own inadequacy—and can cause followers to lose their illusions and overdependence on those leaders. This is a good reminder that all of us—leaders and followers alike—walk through life on “feet of clay.”

Ultimately, the only good thing about any one of us

is the goodness of God. That's why we need to recognize that “our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5).

By: **David H. Roper**

Reflect & Pray

**If you rely upon God's strength
And live a life that's true,
Then what you do in Jesus' name
Will be His work through you. —D. De Haan**

*Only as we see our weakness can we draw upon
God's strength.*

The Mark Of Leadership

Thursday March 18, 2020

Whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. — [Mark 10:44](#)

Today's Scripture:

[Mark 10:35-45](#)

While visiting the campus of Purdue University on a frigid winter day, I came upon two young men chipping away thick ice on the sidewalk next to a fraternity house. Thinking they must be underclassmen who had been assigned the tough job by older fraternity brothers, I said, "They didn't tell you about this when you joined, did they?" One looked up with a smile and said, "Well, we're both upperclassmen. I'm the fraternity vice-president and my friend here is the president." I thanked them for their hard work and went on my way having been reminded that serving others is the mark of a true leader.

When two of Jesus' disciples asked Him for positions of honor in His coming kingdom, the Lord gathered His twelve closest followers and told them, "Whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all" ([Mark 10:43-44](#)). If there was any doubt about what Jesus meant, He reminded them that He had not come to be served but to serve others and to give His life to ransom them from the power of sin (v.45).

The mark of true, godly leadership is not power and privilege, but humble service. God gives us strength to follow Jesus' example and to lead His way.

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

The paths of leadership are trod
By those who humbly walk with God,
Their gracious spirit holds a sway
That makes you want to go their way. —D. DeHaan
A qualified leader is one who has learned to serve.

Example That Encourages

Friday March 19, 2020

I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet . . . I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. — John 13:14-15

Today's Scripture & Insight: 2 Timothy 2:1-7

The story is told that in the late 1800s a group of European pastors attended D. L. Moody's Bible conference in Massachusetts. Following their custom, they put their shoes outside their room before they slept, expecting them to be cleaned by hotel workers. When Moody saw the shoes, he mentioned the need to others because he knew their custom. But he was met with silence. Moody collected all the shoes and cleaned them himself. A friend who made an unexpected visit to his room revealed what Moody had done. The word spread, and the next few nights others took turns doing the cleaning.

Moody's leadership style of humility inspired others to follow his example. The apostle Paul reminded Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Tim. 2:1-2 niv). When we remember that our strength is a result of God's grace, that keeps us humble. Then in humility we pass on God's truth

by being an example that encourages and inspires others to follow.

Jesus Himself is our example of servanthood. He gave His very life for us.

By: **Albert Lee**

Reflect & Pray

Lord Jesus, I know little about humility.
Show me and teach me as I read about Your
example in Your Word. Give me the grace
to humble myself and serve others.
Humility is the result of knowing God and knowing
yourself.

Connecting to Worship: March 21

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Fear – 12

Disciples Mark 10:32

Readings: Jeremiah 31:31-34, Psalm 119:9-16,
Hebrews 5:1-10, Mark 10: 35-45

Connecting to Worship: March 28

Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Unbelief – Crowds of People John 12:36-37

Readings: Zechariah 9:9-12, Psalm 118:19-29, Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-15:47

Helicopter Seeds

Monday March 22, 2020

Unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. John 12:24

Today's Scripture & Insight: John 12:23–33

When our children were young, they loved trying to catch the “helicopter seeds” that fell from our neighbor’s silver maple trees. Each seed resembles a wing. In late spring they twirl to the ground like a helicopter’s rotor blades. The seeds’ purpose is not to fly, but to fall to earth and grow into trees.

Before Jesus was crucified, He told His followers, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. . . . [U]nless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:23–24).

While Jesus’s disciples wanted Him to be honored as the Messiah, He came to give His life so we could be forgiven and transformed through faith in Him. As Jesus’s followers, we hear His words, “Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My

Father will honor the one who serves me” (vv. 25–26).

Helicopter seeds can point us to the miracle of Jesus, the Savior, who died that we might live for Him.

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

**Lord Jesus, we are amazed by Your love. Give us
grace to serve You today as we long to do.**

Jesus calls us to give our lives in serving Him.

Drawn By The Cross

Tuesday March 23, 2020

I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself. — John 12:32

Today's Scripture: John 12:23-36

Towering above New York Harbor is the Statue of Liberty. That stately lady, with freedom's torch held high, has beckoned millions of people who were choking from the stifling air of tyranny or oppression. They've been drawn to what that monument symbolizes—freedom.

Inscribed on Lady Liberty's pedestal are these words by Emma Lazarus from her poem "The New Colossus":

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses
yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse
of your teeming shore;
Send these, the homeless,
tempest-tossed, to me:
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.*

A different monument towers over history, offering spiritual freedom to enslaved peoples everywhere. It's the cross where Jesus hung 2,000 years ago. At first the scene repels us. Then we see the sinless Son of God dying in our place for our sins. From the cross we hear the words "Father, forgive them"

(Luke 23:34) and "It is finished!" (John 19:30). As we trust in Christ as our Savior, the heavy burden of guilt rolls from our sin-weary souls. We are free for all eternity.

Have you heard and responded to the invitation of the cross?

By: **Dennis J. DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

Lord Jesus, I know I'm a sinner and cannot save myself. I need You as my Savior. Thank You for dying in my place and rising again. I believe in You. Please set me free from my sin. I want to live with You in heaven someday. Amen.

Our greatest freedom is freedom from sin.

Rejected Light

Wednesday March 24, 2020

I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. —

John 12:46

Today's Scripture:

John 12:35-46

In the early hours of December 21, 2010, I witnessed an event that last occurred in 1638—a total lunar eclipse on the winter solstice. Slowly the shadow of the earth slipped across the bright full moon and made it appear a dark red. It was a remarkable and beautiful event. Yet it reminded me that while physical darkness is part of God's created design, spiritual darkness is not.

Scottish pastor Alexander MacLaren said: "Rejected light is the parent of the densest darkness, and the man who, having the light, does not trust it, piles around himself thick clouds of obscurity and gloom." Jesus described this self-imposed spiritual eclipse of heart and mind when He said, "If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23).

The great invitation of Christmas is to open our hearts to the Savior who came to end our darkness. Jesus said, "While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light. . . . I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness" (John 12:36,46).

The way out of our spiritual night is to walk in the light with Him.

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

Come to the Light, 'tis shining for thee, Sweetly the Light has dawned upon me; Once I was blind, but now I can see— The Light of the world is Jesus. —

Bliss

When we walk in the Light, we won't stumble in the darkness.

Undercover Christians

Thursday March 25, 2020

They loved the praise of men more than the praise
of God. — John 12:43

Today's Scripture: John 12:35-43

According to naturalists, butterflies of the Kallima family are able to pull off a unique disappearing act. Also known as “dead-leaf butterflies,” these insects have brilliant colors on the upper sides of their wings, but underneath they bear the lines and markings of a dead leaf and are noticeably drab.

In flight, this butterfly produces a flash of color easily detected by friend and foe alike. But when it lands, the colors disappear and it is transformed into a “dead leaf.” It becomes almost invisible because the vein-like appearance of its wings includes markings that mimic holes and fungus. It even sways in the breeze like a leaf.

Believers in Christ sometimes take on the appearance of the world to avoid detection. That’s what some religious leaders did in John 12. They believed in Jesus but didn’t make it known for fear of losing their position (v.42). We must be consistent, showing our colors for the Lord on all occasions, and not quickly blending into our surroundings when we feel threatened.

Yes, we can avoid ridicule from the world by going undercover, but that shows we love the praise of men more than the praise of God (v.43). Let’s

maintain a clear-cut testimony at all times and in all circumstances.

By: **Mart DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

**Lord of my life, henceforth I bear
The name of Christian everywhere;
Therefore, O Christ, my spirit claim
And make me worthy of Your Name. —Freeman**

*Work harder at being what you should be than at
hiding what you are.*

Crowd Pleasers

Friday March 26, 2020

They loved the praise of men more than the praise
of God. — John 12:43

Today's Scripture:
John 12:35-43

I once read a newspaper story about an old carnival headliner nicknamed “Cannonball.” In his younger days, he was blasted out of a cannon 1,200 times, pulled a 90-pound weight across a table with his eyelids, and performed many other bizarre stunts. When asked why he did such things, he replied, “Do you know what it’s like to feel the applause of 60,000 people? That’s why I did it over and over.”

In John 12 we learn about some leaders who were also motivated by a desire to please others. In their case, however, they refused to follow Jesus openly because they wanted to be accepted by the Pharisees. Although they had seen the Savior’s miracles and believed in Him, they wouldn’t acknowledge this publicly. “They loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (v.43). And I believe we are safe in assuming that many people failed to turn to Jesus because they were also crowd pleasers who feared the disapproval of these “chief” crowd pleasers.

We are all subject to social pressures. If we are true to ourselves and to God, we’ll be able to withstand the strong pull of the crowd. But if we become

crowd pleasers, we’ll be in far worse shape than the man who kept climbing back into that cannon!

By: **Mart DeHaan**

Reflect & Pray

**If we, to gain the world's applause,
Refuse to own the Savior's cause,
What shame will fill us on that day
When Thou Thy glory shall display! —Anon.**

*Yielding to God's Spirit within prevents conforming
to the world without.*

Connecting to Worship: March 28

**Theme: Opposition to the Cross: Unbelief –
Crowds of People John 12:36-37**

Readings: Zechariah 9:9-12, Psalm 118:19-29,
Philippians 2:5-11, Mark 14:1-15:47

Connecting to Worship: April 4

Theme: Easter Sunday

Readings: Exodus 15:1-11, Psalm 118:15-29, 1 Corinthians 5:6b-8, John 20:1-1

The King's Offer

Monday March 29, 2020

The multitudes . . . cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" — [Matthew 21:9](#)

Today's Scripture:

[Matthew 21:1-11](#)

I have often wondered how many of those people who enthusiastically cried, "Hosanna!" on Palm Sunday shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" a few days later. Some may have been keenly disappointed, even angry, that Christ didn't use His miraculous power to establish an earthly kingdom. Hadn't He created a golden opportunity to rally popular support by parading into Jerusalem and offering Himself as King?

Many Jews failed to recognize that before Jesus would openly assert His sovereignty He had to rule in their hearts. Their greatest need was not to be freed from Caesar's rule but to be released from the chains of pride, self-righteousness, and rebellion against God. They wanted the visible kingdom prophesied in the Old Testament with all its material benefits. But the Messiah first had to die for the sins of mankind and rise again to establish the basis for a spiritual rule.

The issue is the same today. Christ does not offer immunity from life's hardships, a cure for every disease, or the promise of financial success. What the King offered then is what He offers today—Himself as the sacrifice for our sins, and a challenge to serve Him. If we accept His offer, we will not be disappointed.

By: Dennis J. DeHaan

Reflect & Pray

**There's no disappointment in Jesus,
He's all that He promised to be;
His love and His care comfort me everywhere;
He is no disappointment to me. —Hallett**

Putting Christ first brings satisfaction that lasts.

The Day With No Name

Tuesday March 30, 2020

If we hope for what we do not see, we eagerly wait for it with perseverance. — [Romans 8:25](#)

Today's Scripture:

[Romans 8:18-25](#)

In Louisiana, a woman lies buried beneath a grove of 150-year-old oak trees in the cemetery of an Episcopal church. Only one word is carved on her tombstone: "Waiting."

A friend of mine knows an elderly pastor who delivered a stirring Good Friday sermon titled "It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'." In a cadence that increases in tempo and volume, his sermon contrasts how the world looked on Friday—when the forces of evil seemed to have triumphed—with how it looked on Sunday. The disciples who lived through both days never doubted God again. They learned that when God seems most absent, He may be closest of all.

The sermon skips one day, though—Saturday—the day with no name. What the disciples lived through in small scale, we now live through on cosmic scale. It's Saturday on planet earth; will Sunday ever come?

That dark, Golgothan Friday can only be called good because of what happened on Sunday. Easter opened up a crack in a universe winding down

toward decay. And someday God will enlarge the miracle of Easter to cosmic scale.

Meanwhile, we wait in hopeful anticipation, living out our days on Saturday, the in-between day with no name.

It's Saturday. But Sunday's comin'.

By: [Philip Yancey](#)

Easter Every Day

Wednesday March 31, 2020

He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. —

Matthew 28:6

Today's Scripture & Insight: Hebrews 10:11-18

A friend of mine, who is a preschool teacher, overheard an animated conversation among her students. Little Maria threw out the question: “Who loves God?” All of them responded, “I do! I do! I do!” Billy said, “I love *Jesus*.” Kelly protested, “But He *died*.” Billy said, “Yeah, but every Easter He rises from the dead!”

Obviously, young Billy’s understanding of the meaning of Easter is still developing. We know that Jesus died *once for all* (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 10:12) and, of course, rose from the dead *once*. Three days after paying the penalty of our sins on the cross, the sinless Jesus conquered death by rising from the grave and breaking the power of sin. It was this final sacrifice of blood that opened the only way for us to have a relationship with God now and a home with Him forevermore.

“Christ died for our sins, . . . He was buried, and . . . He rose again the third day” (1 Cor. 15:3-4). He has promised that He is preparing a place for us (John 14:1-4), and He will someday return. One day we will be with our risen Savior.

That’s why every year at Eastertime—in fact, every day of the year—we have reason to celebrate the resurrection of our Savior. “I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth” (Ps. 34:1).

By: Cindy Hess Kasper

Connecting to Worship: April 1

Theme: Holy (Maundy) Thursday

Readings: Exodus 24:3-11, Psalm 116:12-19, 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Mark 14:1

“And It Was Night”

Thursday April 1, 2020

Having received the piece of bread, [Judas] then went out immediately. And it was night. —

John 13:30

Today's Scripture:

John 13:21-30

During a business trip to Philadelphia, I attended an evening service on the Thursday before Easter—a service of Communion and Tenebrae (darkness) held in a small chapel lit by candles. Following the bread and the cup, a passage was read aloud from the gospel of John, one candle was extinguished, and we sang a verse from a hymn about Jesus’ journey to the cross. This was repeated 14 times until the chapel was completely dark. In silence we knelt in prayer and then left one by one without speaking.

The darkness of this type of service can remind us of the dark elements surrounding Jesus’ death.

Think of His last meal with the disciples (John 13:21-30) as He explained that one of them would betray Him. Only Jesus knew it was Judas. “Having received the piece of bread, [Judas] then went out immediately. And it was night” (v.30).

On the darkest evening of Jesus’ life, He agonized in prayer in the Garden, faced a wrongful arrest, endured humiliation at the hands of religious leaders, and winced at Peter’s denials. Yet He moved faithfully toward the cross where He would die for our sins.

Jesus endured darkness and death to give us light and life. Praise Him for what He went through for us!

By: **David C. McCasland**

Reflect & Pray

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down;
Did e’er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown? —Watts
Calvary reveals the vileness of our sin and the vastness of God’s love.

Connecting to Worship: April 2

Theme: Good Friday

Readings: Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Psalm 22, Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9, John 18:1-19:42

Triumph In Tragedy

Friday April 2, 2020

When they had come to the place called Calvary,
there they crucified Him. —

Luke 23:33

Today's Scripture:

Luke 23:26-56

We call it “Good Friday,” but no one standing there that day would have called that Friday “good.” The best man that history ever knew was nailed to a Roman cross and murdered. For His enemies it was a victory of sorts; for the soldiers it was simply another day’s work; for His followers it was the death of their brightest hopes and greatest dreams. But no one would have called that Friday “good.”

That is true of many “bad Fridays” if you consider them apart from Resurrection Sunday. They make life seem futile—without purpose and meaning. But God’s most striking victories rise out of the graves of apparent defeats.

In his book *Idols for Destruction*, Herbert Schlossberg wrote, “We are not the lords of history and do not control its outcome, but we have assurance that there is a Lord of history and He

controls its outcome. We need a theological interpretation of disaster, one that recognizes that God acts in such events as captivities, defeats, and crucifixions. The Bible can be interpreted as a string of God’s triumphs disguised as disasters.”

Face each day with trust in Jesus Christ. God’s greatest victories often come disguised as defeats.

By: Haddon W. Robinson

Reflect & Pray

**The purposes of God are right,
Although we may not see
Just how He works all things for good
And transforms tragedy. —Sper**

*God's most striking victories rise out of the graves
of apparent defeats.*

Connecting to Worship: April 4

Theme: Easter Sunday

**Readings: Exodus 15:1-11, Psalm 118:15-29, 1
Corinthians 5:6b-8, John 20:1-18**