



DEATH
TO
LIFE
outpouring
RISEN
RESURRECTED

God Is For Us

from Passion to Pentecost

ENTRANCE
ASCENSION
40 DAYS

A Devotional Guide Through
Holy Week and the Easter Season

PURPOSE
CRUCIFIED

NOTES

¹ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: An Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1978) 877-878.

² William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: An Exposition of the Gospel According to Mark* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1975) 668.

³ Matt Redman, *Facedown* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 2004) 13-14.

⁴ Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 & 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988) 129.

⁵ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Exposition of Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1962) 168.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 175.

⁸ John F. Walvoord, *Jesus Christ Our Lord* (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Publishers, 1969) 248.

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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Palm Sunday

1. How did Jesus fail to meet the expectations of the crowd on Palm Sunday?
2. How does Jesus fail to meet some of your own expectations of him?

Good Friday

1. What all do you think Jesus must have been feeling in his humanity when he cried out “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”
2. How is God’s love for us revealed through Jesus’ suffering and crucifixion?
3. What is significant about the curtain being torn in two (vs. 38)?

Easter

1. Why do you think these three women were so faithful and loyal to Jesus?
3. How does Jesus’ triumph over the grave affect the way you live today?

Worship: Called to Fall Down

1. How does Revelation 4 inform your imagination and biblical view of heaven?
2. Do you ever find yourself “facedown” before God in worship? If so, when?

Friendship: Called to Open Up

1. David and Jonathan enjoyed a very loyal, trusting friendship together. Why is it often so hard for us to be vulnerable and transparent with others?
2. Why do we need Biblical community?

Mission: Called to Speak Up

1. Have you ever had the opportunity to share your hope as a believer? Describe.
2. Why do you think we are sometimes hesitant about sharing our faith?

Ministry: Called to Move Out

1. How do you feel most equipped to serve and build up the body of Christ?
2. Is your home a place where you practice hospitality to those around you?

Discipleship: Called to Follow Jesus

1. What does it mean to share in Christ’s resurrection power? And his sufferings?
2. What does following Jesus look like in your life? How are you “pressing on”?

Ascension

1. Why is the event of the ascension so important?
2. What are the benefits of Christ’s intercession for us as believers?

Pentecost

1. How does the Holy Spirit still empower the church (God’s people) today?
2. What does it mean to be “filled with the Holy Spirit” (Ephesians 5:18)?

INTRODUCTION

GOD IS FOR US: FROM PASSION TO PENTECOST | AN OVERVIEW

³¹ *What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?*
³² *He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?* ³³ *Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.* ³⁴ *Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:31-34).*

In this passage above you can almost feel the apostle Paul’s emotions building to a climax as he walks through the ministry of Christ on our behalf: *“the one who died... who was raised... who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us.”* These are the events that we remember and celebrate throughout Holy Week and the Easter season. This devotional is meant to be a guide as we journey together through this 9-week series from Palm Sunday, in March, to Pentecost, in May. You may choose to use this resource as an individual, as a family, or as a small group. ***Be sure to use the reflection questions on the last page of the devotional.*** I hope and pray that as you engage with this season you will find comfort and strength in the present advocacy of Christ and the Holy Spirit. God is for us!

HOLY WEEK & EASTER

Holy Week is the week between Palm Sunday (or Passion Sunday) and Easter. It is a time to remember and celebrate the events that took place in real time and space in redemptive history. Palm Sunday celebrates Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem: the beginning of his journey to the cross. Good Friday is a sobering remembrance of the crucifixion, highlighting the depth of God’s love for us. Easter is a joyful and hopeful celebration of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. It is a time to highlight how Jesus rose to new life, defeating death and the power of the grave.

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

After his resurrection, Jesus appeared to his disciples over a period of 40 days before he ascended to heaven. This will be a time for us, as a church body, to also “walk with Jesus,” in a sense, for a period of 40 days. During this 5-week sermon series we will be highlighting some of the characteristics of being a disciple of Christ, filled with passion and purpose for God’s kingdom.

ASCENSION & PENTECOST

40 days after the resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven, returning to the Father and taking his position at the Father’s right hand. 10 days after the ascension (50 days after the resurrection), Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit fulfilled Jesus’ promise in John 14:16 to send “another Advocate” who would equip and empower his people.

- Paxson Jeancake, Director of Worship

PALM SUNDAY

March 19-20

The Road Into Jerusalem

Scripture Reading

Mark 11:8-11

⁸ Many in the crowd spread their garments on the road ahead of him, and others spread leafy branches they had cut in the fields. ⁹ Jesus was in the center of the procession, and the people all around him were shouting,

“Praise God! Blessings on the one who comes in the name of the LORD!

¹⁰ Blessings on the coming Kingdom of our ancestor David!

Praise God in highest heaven!”

¹¹ So Jesus came to Jerusalem and went into the Temple. After looking around carefully at everything, he left because it was late in the afternoon. Then he returned to Bethany with the twelve disciples.

Reflection

Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was filled with irony. Though the crowds were singing his praise, Jesus was weeping as he rode into the city. In Luke’s account of the Triumphal Entry we read: *“But as they came closer to Jerusalem and Jesus saw the city ahead, he began to weep. How I wish today that you of all people would understand the way to peace. But now it is too late, and peace is hidden from your eyes”* (Luke 19:41-42).

Many in the crowd that day had certain expectations of Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem. Many assumed that he was riding in to conquer Israel’s enemies. One commentator writes: *“No doubt in that huge crowd there were some truly converted people... But by and large what Israel wanted was its own kind of Messiah, a Messiah of the earth, a political deliverer. And that was deplorable. No wonder Jesus was weeping.”*¹

We can fall into the same trap today. We often have our own expectations about who we want Jesus *to be* for us or what we want him *to do* for us, but Jesus is not a genie in a bottle. Mercifully, he does not always give us what we *want*, but he gives us all that we truly *need*. He knows our hearts better than we do. He knows when, by faith, we are seeking his kingdom and when we are full of self-seeking motives. Jesus’ way for us to find restoration and peace is often a very different road than what we have in mind. God’s thoughts are not our thoughts; his ways are higher than our ways (Is. 55:8-9).

PENTECOST

May 14-15

The Outpouring of the Holy Spirit

Scripture Reading

Acts 2:1-11

On the day of Pentecost all the believers were meeting together in one place. ² Suddenly, there was a sound from heaven like the roaring of a mighty wind-storm, and it filled the house where they were sitting. ³ Then, what looked like flames or tongues of fire appeared and settled on each of them. ⁴ And everyone present was filled with the Holy Spirit and began speaking in other languages, as the Holy Spirit gave them this ability.

⁵ At that time there were devout Jews from every nation living in Jerusalem.

⁶ When they heard the loud noise, everyone came running, and they were bewildered to hear their own languages being spoken by the believers.

⁷ They were completely amazed. “How can this be?” they exclaimed. “These people are all from Galilee, ⁸ and yet we hear them speaking in our own native languages! ⁹ Here we are—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, the province of Asia, ¹⁰ Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, and the areas of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism), ¹¹ Cretans, and Arabs. And we all hear these people speaking in our own languages about the wonderful things God has done!”

Reflection

Our series and devotion ends with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This was a fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to the apostles: “You will be baptized with the Holy Spirit within a few days” (Acts 1:5). The Spirit filled everyone sitting in the house so that the 120 were all spiritually baptized. After Peter stood up and preached to the crowd 3,000 more were baptized and added to the church that day. After these events we find one of the earliest descriptions of the life and community of the church: “All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching, and to the fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord’s Supper), and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). 2,000 years later the church functions the same today: baptized in the Spirit, we live and serve in Biblical community together and share our hope with the world. God’s plan over the centuries has been to fill and equip ordinary people, by the power of his Spirit, to do extraordinary things for his kingdom.

ASCENSION

May 7-8

The Return to the Father

Scripture Reading

Acts 1:6-11

⁶ So when the apostles were with Jesus, they kept asking him, “Lord, has the time come for you to free Israel and restore our kingdom?”

⁷ He replied, “The Father alone has the authority to set those dates and times, and they are not for you to know. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him. ¹⁰ As they strained to see him rising into heaven, two white-robed men suddenly stood among them. ¹¹ “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why are you standing here staring into heaven? Jesus has been taken from you into heaven, but someday he will return from heaven in the same way you saw him go!”

Reflection

In 2005 I wrote a song called “King of Glory” that began my journey with the doctrine of the ascension. The ascension is a highly neglected doctrine in our current day and age although it is a prominent theme throughout the Scriptures. It is not a doctrine with which many Christians have studied, heard, or read about to the same degree as Christ’s birth, death, and resurrection. In a profound way, a robust doctrine of the ascension causes us to think seriously about present spiritual realities - about what Jesus is doing right now! Personally, it has shaped and formed the way I think about and pray to Christ. To know that we are not alone as we struggle with temptations, fears, and addictions should bring us great courage and comfort. To know that Jesus is interceding (Heb. 7:25) and advocating for us is powerful. One author writes: *“The wonderful results of the intercession give assurance to the believer of security in Christ, hope for eternal salvation, protection from spiritual and physical dangers in life and a pledge of ultimate sanctification. Spiritual triumph for the believer is inevitably linked to the heavenly Intercessor.”*⁸ This is good news! This is the gospel of the ascension.

GOOD FRIDAY

March 25

The Death of Jesus

Scripture Reading

Mark 15:33-41

³³ At noon, darkness fell across the whole land until three o’clock. ³⁴ Then at three o’clock Jesus called out with a loud voice, “*Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?*” which means “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?”

³⁵ Some of the bystanders misunderstood and thought he was calling for the prophet Elijah. ³⁶ One of them ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, holding it up to him on a reed stick so he could drink. “Wait!” he said. “Let’s see whether Elijah comes to take him down!”

³⁷ Then Jesus uttered another loud cry and breathed his last. ³⁸ And the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.

³⁹ When the Roman officer who stood facing him saw how he had died, he exclaimed, “This man truly was the Son of God!”

⁴⁰ Some women were there, watching from a distance, including Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James the younger and of Joseph), and Salome.

⁴¹ They had been followers of Jesus and had cared for him while he was in Galilee. Many other women who had come with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Reflection

Jesus was quoting and fulfilling the words from Psalm 22 as he cried out, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” In the dark hours between twelve o’clock and three o’clock, Jesus suffered indescribable agonies. Truly, this was a moment that reveals Jesus’ humanity and the reality that he carried on a very real, intimate relationship with God the Father. For the Son to have endured such darkness and separation only magnifies an eternal plan of love and restoration. In addition, the fact that the curtain in the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom, at the moment of Jesus’ death, is of profound importance to us. Its symbolic significance is made clear through Hebrews 10:20: *“By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.”* This life-giving way is access to our Mediator, our Advocate. We can boldly go to him for help at any time.

EASTER

March 26-27

The Resurrection

Scripture Reading

Mark 16:1-8

Saturday evening, when the Sabbath ended, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went out and purchased burial spices so they could anoint Jesus' body. ²Very early on Sunday morning, just at sunrise, they went to the tomb. ³On the way they were asking each other, "Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?" ⁴But as they arrived, they looked up and saw that the stone, which was very large, had already been rolled aside.

⁵When they entered the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a white robe sitting on the right side. The women were shocked, ⁶but the angel said, "Don't be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He isn't here! He is risen from the dead! Look, this is where they laid his body. ⁷Now go and tell his disciples, including Peter, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there, just as he told you before he died."

⁸The women fled from the tomb, trembling and bewildered, and they said nothing to anyone because they were too frightened.

Reflection

The presence of these three faithful women (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome) was so profound. With the exception of John none of the other disciples who belong to the group of twelve were reported to have been present at Calvary, but these women were present! They were also present at his burial and "saw where Jesus' body was laid" (Mark 15:47). And they were the first to hear that he had risen! Being witnesses of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection appearance, they were qualified witnesses of facts of redemption on which, under God, the church depends for its faith.² All were radically changed by the life and ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and their gratitude overflowed. I also love that Mark included a certain detail in the angel's message to the women: "Now go tell his disciples, *including Peter*, that Jesus is going ahead of you to Galilee." Even though they deserted him and even though Peter denied him... the Savior still pursued them. Mark is giving us, the reader, the anticipation of reunion and restoration. That note of anticipation is resolved in John's gospel as Jesus gently restores Peter, exhorting him to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-19).

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

April 30 - May 1

Discipleship: Called to Follow Jesus

Scripture Reading

Philippians 3:8-14

⁸Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the infinite value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I could gain Christ ⁹and become one with him. I no longer count on my own righteousness through obeying the law; rather, I become righteous through faith in Christ. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith. ¹⁰I want to know Christ and experience the mighty power that raised him from the dead. I want to suffer with him, sharing in his death, ¹¹so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection from the dead!

¹²I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. ¹³No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.

Reflection

Paul counted all of his many religious accolades as *garbage* so that he could gain Christ and know him more. He wants to know the power that raised Christ from the dead. In other words, he longs for an ever-increasing supply of the power that proceeds from the risen and exalted Savior.⁵ He also desires to share in Christ's sufferings and death, recognizing that suffering is part of what brings about refining in our life. Finally, Paul describes his focus on pressing on to reach the end of the race and to receive the heavenly prize. Picture a runner straining every nerve and muscle as he keeps on running with all his might toward the goal, his hand stretched out as if to grasp it.⁶ This is the impression Paul is trying to make. All of this is part of what it means for us to follow Jesus: to know him more; to share in his resurrection power and in his sufferings and death; and to press on to reach our heavenly prize. What is this heavenly prize? In part, the blessings of everlasting life such as perfect wisdom, joy, holiness, peace, fellowship, all enjoyed to the glory of God, in a restored universe, and in the company of Christ and all the saints.⁷ This is our destination.

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

April 23-24

Ministry: Called to Move Out

Scripture Reading

Ephesians 4:1-4; 11-16

Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God.² Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.³ Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.⁴ For there is one body and one Spirit, just as you have been called to one glorious hope for the future...

¹¹ Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers.¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.¹³ This will continue until we all come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God's Son that we will be mature in the Lord, measuring up to the full and complete standard of Christ.

¹⁴ Then we will no longer be immature like children. We won't be tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching. We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth.¹⁵ Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church.¹⁶ He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.

Reflection

This portion of Paul's letter to the Ephesians is like a rallying cry for the church. First he addresses the "gifts" that Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Then he explains how their job is to "equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ." This is part of our job description as believers. We are called to be equipped, and we are called to serve. God has not designed us to only be fed and ministered to. Rather, we are called to do our part in keeping the body of Christ healthy and growing. We are also called to be ambassadors in the workplace and in our communities. Our homes should be places where we can rest and find peace *and* where hospitality is practiced with those around us. We are called to engage our culture, not isolate from it.

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

April 2-3

Worship: Called to Fall Down

Scripture Reading

Revelation 4:1-2, 6, 8-11

Then as I looked, I saw a door standing open in heaven, and the same voice I had heard before spoke to me like a trumpet blast. The voice said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must happen after this."² And instantly I was in the Spirit, and I saw a throne in heaven and someone sitting on it... In front of the throne was a shiny sea of glass, sparkling like crystal...⁶ In the center and around the throne were four living beings, each covered with eyes, front and back...⁸ Day after day and night after night they keep on saying,

"Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God, the Almighty—
the one who always was, who is, and who is still to come."

⁹ Whenever the living beings give glory and honor and thanks to the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever),¹⁰ the twenty-four elders fall down and worship the one sitting on the throne (the one who lives forever and ever). And they lay their crowns before the throne and say,

¹¹ "You are worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory and honor and power. For you created all things, and they exist because you created what you pleased."

Reflection

It is so amazing to imagine the worship of heaven! In this passage, John recounts two hymns of praise sung in heaven: one by the "four living beings" who glorify God's holiness, power, and eternity; the other by the "twenty-four elders" who glorify God for his work of creation. The twenty-four elders are mentioned many times falling down before the one seated on the throne (5:8, 14; 7:11; 11:16; 19:4). This seems to be the most natural posture before the Almighty. It should be our posture as well. Worship leader and songwriter, Matt Redman writes: "*When we face up to the glory of God, we soon find ourselves facedown in worship... Facedown worship always begins as a posture of the heart. It's people so desperate for the increase of Christ that they find themselves decreasing to the ground in an act of reverent submission. When a soul is so captivated by the Almighty, to bend low in true and total surrender seems the only appropriate response.*"³ May this be true of us. As we face up to the glory of God, may we find ourselves facedown in worship.

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

April 9-10

Friendship: Called to Open Up

Scripture Reading

I Samuel 18:1-9

After David had finished talking with Saul, he met Jonathan, the king's son. There was an immediate bond between them, for Jonathan loved David.

² From that day on Saul kept David with him and wouldn't let him return home. ³ And Jonathan made a solemn pact with David, because he loved him as he loved himself. ⁴ Jonathan sealed the pact by taking off his robe and giving it to David, together with his tunic, sword, bow, and belt.

⁵ Whatever Saul asked David to do, David did it successfully. So Saul made him a commander over the men of war, an appointment that was welcomed by the people and Saul's officers alike. ⁶ When the victorious Israelite army was returning home after David had killed the Philistine, women from all the towns of Israel came out to meet King Saul. They sang and danced for joy with tambourines and cymbals. ⁷ This was their song:

"Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands!"

⁸ This made Saul very angry. "What's this?" he said. "They credit David with ten thousands and me with only thousands. Next they'll be making him their king!" ⁹ So from that time on Saul kept a jealous eye on David.

Reflection

The story of David and Jonathan is one of true friendship, loyalty and trust. Jonathan's action in stripping off his royal armor and weapons to give to David was more than spontaneous generosity. It was a recognition of David's worth, for which Jonathan was willing to give his all, even his right to the throne.⁴ Jonathan was the one who helped buffer the rage, jealousy, and paranoia of his father. Their friendship reveals our own need for "safe people" who will walk with us through the trials and struggles of life, and who stick closer than a brother (Prov. 18:24). Ultimately, Christ is the Friend of sinners who paid the ultimate sacrifice for us. He is the one who is with us through every storm.

40 DAYS OF PASSION & PURPOSE

April 16-17

Mission: Called to Speak Up

Scripture Reading

I Peter 3:13-18

¹³ Now, who will want to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you suffer for doing what is right, God will reward you for it. So don't worry or be afraid of their threats. ¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!

¹⁸ Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.

Reflection

Peter is encouraging us to "worship Christ as Lord of your life" and to always "be ready to explain" your hope as a believer. What a simple, practical yet profound way to live. I know that when I am worshipping Christ as Lord of my life, I am filled with a sense of gratitude. Gratitude is the posture that allows me to be ready to explain or to share with someone, who might ask, about my faith. The former leads to the latter. By contrast, when I am living out of selfishness and self-centeredness, thinking that I am God, I am totally unprepared to offer the food of the Gospel to someone who is hungry to hear it. Equally practical and profound are the charges to be gentle and respectful and to keep our conscience clear. When I am thinking of others before myself, I am in a much healthier place, spiritually and emotionally. When my conscience is clear, I am at peace with God, myself, and others. This kind of peace can withstand the various trials and sufferings that come our way.