

PASSION WEEK

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



PASSION WEEK

DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

CONTRIBUTORS

Lou Giampaglia [Lead/Teaching Pastor]

Ricky Ragone [Music & Arts/Youth Pastor]

Chris Kajano [Pastoral Intern]



440 Rt 9W
Glenmont, NY 12077

www.kingschapel.net

ABOUT THIS DEVOTIONAL

Passion Week chronicles Jesus' last week on earth. It is an important week in the life of the Church because during this week, we witness the events that led Jesus to the cross and his glorious resurrection. This devotional is a guide to take us through some of the events that happened between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. Each day is broken down in three sections.

READ

First, spend time reading scripture. The scripture readings for each day will correspond chronologically with Jesus's final days. Reading the accounts from each Gospel writer gives us a greater picture of what happened on those last days. The gospel accounts work together to tell us Jesus's story.

REFLECT

After reading the scripture passages the reflection section will provide some insight on the text. From historical context to implications for our lives, this section is to help us digest the scripture that we've read.

RESPOND

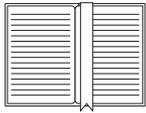
Lastly, we want to respond to what has been shown to us through the text. Our relationship with God is a 2-way relationship. After hearing from God as He speaks to us through His word, we respond and talk to Him. Our response may be confession and repentance, praise and thanksgiving, making request, or glorying in the presence of our awesome God and Savior.

We hope that this devotional will help with your personal study of Scriptures, deepen your understanding of the gospel, and enflame your affections for our matchless triune God.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Luke 19:37-38 “As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, saying, ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!’”

READ



Matthew 21:1-9
Mark 11:1-10
Luke 19:28-40
John 12:12-19

RESPOND

The greatest need we have is forgiveness of sin therefore rejoice that Jesus, our deliverer, “did not come to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him” (John 3:17).

Ask God to reveal to you the areas in your life that you have not surrendered to King Jesus. Ask Him for the faith to accept His plan, His agenda for your life. Always remembering to “look to 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” (Hebrews 12:2).

REFLECT

The Sunday Morning Jesus entered Jerusalem was a very busy day. Millions of pilgrims were entering the city to celebrate the Passover. From the time of Israel’s Exodus from Egypt the annual slaying of the Passover lamb was a feast remembering the substitutionary blood of the slain lamb that spared the life of first-born Israelite in Egypt. The city was jammed packed, even the outskirts of the city was lined with tents as many camped outside the walls of Jerusalem.

As Jesus went down the Mount of Olives toward the city a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from trees and spread them on the road. Luke tells us that they also placed some of the garments on the colt that Jesus was riding. John 12:13 “So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, ‘Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!’”

The placing of their garments on the colt and on the road symbolizes the people’s willingness to surrender to Jesus all of what they had. It was an act of submission and reverence. The palm branches symbolized the nations desire for deliverance. The exclamation “Hosanna” (which literally means save now), was taken from Psalm 118 and is highly messianic is steeped with imagery of deliverance. They recognized Jesus as a king, but He was not the king they were looking for.

In our day, as in that day, there are lots of people with lots of agendas who are more than happy to welcome Jesus - providing he does what he is told and accomplishes their agenda. Jesus did not enter Jerusalem to further anyone’s agenda, he came to lay down his life for lost sinners, like us. The crowds that gathered would later turn on Jesus, and by Friday morning their voices shout out “crucify him!” Their agenda was thwarted and therefore Jesus was no longer useful to them.

How often do we seek a deliverer from difficult or uncomfortable circumstances instead of seeking a deliverer from sin and sinful patterns of behavior? We hand Christ our agenda instead of willing to submit to His agenda. Religious people come to God because they find him useful, gospel believing people find God beautiful. Religious people come to God and hand him their agenda, gospel people come to God and see their sin and see His triumphant victory at Calvary and adore, love and delight in God.

JESUS CURSES THE FIG TREE

Mark 11:12-14 “On the following day, when they came from Bethany, he was hungry. And seeing in the distance a fig tree in leaf, he went to see if he could find anything on it. When he came to it, he found nothing but leaves, for it was not the season for figs. And he said to it, ‘May no one ever eat fruit from you again.’ And his disciples heard it.”

REFLECT

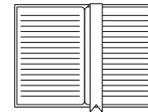
Just a day after Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem he walks by a fig tree along the road with only leaves on it. Jesus speaks to the tree and says, “may no one ever eat fruit from you again.” Matthew adds that the tree withered immediately. To understand this parable, we must understand the culture and the context. Jesus did not spitefully curse a tree, because he was hungry. He did it because he wanted to provide a visual parable of what was happening to Israel in that time. It also teaches a valuable lesson for God’s people today.

In our anti-God culture we dismiss the reality that God is the creator. We neglect that he has the right and authority, if he chooses, to teach us truth over the sparing the life of a tree. Jesus did so similarly in Mark 5, when he sent a herd of pigs over the hill and into the sea so that a mad man can be saved. The tree is God’s way of dealing with what is going on in our hearts - which is far more important to Him. The tree only bore leaves because it was dying on the inside. At this point in the season fig trees would have a “pre-fig” growing on it, which was part of the previous year’s crop. That “pre-fig” would eventually give way to the actual fig that was edible. Because last year’s growth did not produce anything, life was no longer viable. Jesus pronounces the tree dead. The life of the tree looked good on the outside with its lavished foliage, but it was decaying on the inside. Contextually, the fig tree and its fruitfulness was a strong symbol of Israel’s proud birthright as God’s chosen people. Hosea 9:10 says, “I found Israel like grapes in the wilderness; I saw your forefathers as the earliest fruit on the fig tree in its first season.”

This parable takes place between Jesus’s triumphal entrance and his cleansing of the temple. Why is this significant? Israel was looking beautiful outwardly but inwardly they were dead. The leaves only a covering its deadness. The temple was turned into a place of robbery and extortion and the short-lived praises of King Jesus were a dead outward act emboldened by no inward change. The leaves are symbolic of Israel’s religious activity, and the fruitlessness is equally symbolic of Israel spiritual life. They have a form of godliness without power. They have a zeal for God without knowledge. Jesus cleansed the temple and therefore he denounced their religion. Jesus cursed the fig tree and thus he proclaims their nation as fruitless.

Just because we look good, just because we are busy, just because our leaves are large and shiny doesn’t mean we are bearing fruit. In John 15:5 it says that “every branch that abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.” Fruit is ever and always the evidence of true salvation not the means of salvation. We are saved, reconciled to God by faith alone through Christ alone. Fruitfulness is an infallible mark of true Christianity. Jesus is saying, “I want more than activity,” are you changing from the inside out? Is your character changing? Is it clear to people that there has been a radical transformation in your life at the very center of your being?

READ



Matthew 21:18-22
Mark 11:12-14, 20-26

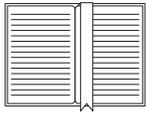
RESPOND

We must never see bearing fruit as a work that saves. However, we must never stop yielding ourselves to the work of the Spirit through whom we bear the fruit of Christlikeness. In John 15:5 Jesus said, “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.”

Let’s respond together by acknowledging our desperate need for the giver of life, Jesus. And let’s pray that the work of demonstrating the gospel in love, and declaring it with words will bear much fruit. Soli Deo Gloria.

Matthew 21:42 “Jesus said to them, ‘Have you never read in the Scriptures: “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; this was the Lord’s doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?’””

READ



Matthew 21:33-46
Mark 12:1-12
Luke 20:9-19
Psalms 118:22-23

RESPOND

Think about any unconfessed sin, and remember that at its root, sin is rebellion against God. Meditate on Jesus’ suffering on the cross and let it remind you of the ugliness of sin but also of Jesus’ great love for you. He went to the cross to free you from bondage to sin, and to make you his beloved son or daughter.

Pray: Father, I’m moved by your love for me. I’m wrecked when I consider the severity of my sin and my deserved punishment. But you have not left me hopeless. You did for me what I could never do for myself. When I was unwilling to bow before you, you humbled to the Father and endured my judgement. Move me, Holy Spirit, to celebrate the gospel every day, and to apply its nourishment to my hungry soul. In Jesus’ name, amen.

REFLECT

Like mine, your Bible probably includes a heading over these passages of Scripture. Two of the headings in my version refer to Jesus’ lesson as “The Parable of the Tenants.” But the title above Luke’s account is slightly different: “The Parable of the Wicked Tenants.” In case you didn’t know, these titles are not present in the original Greek text but were added by biblical translators centuries later (along with chapter and verse breaks) to aid readers. If I was a member of the translation committee, I would have cast my vote for the title preceding Luke’s narrative.

In my opinion, these tenants should be included in the list of the top 10 most wicked people in all of literature. They are an organized group of brutal, cold-blooded murderers whose only redeeming quality appears to be that they produce good grapes (and wine). They have forgotten that the vineyard they till has been temporarily lent to them. The rightful owner who lives in another country is essentially “out of sight and out of mind.”

Jesus minces no words when he describes their brutality. The tenants “beat”, “wounded”, “struck on the head”, “stoned”, and “killed” every servant the landowners sent to collect his fruit. In a final attempt at diplomacy, the owner decides to send his son. “They will respect my son,” he reasons.

But the presence of the owner’s son makes no difference to them. It doesn’t matter that the one who most represents the owner and his authority over the vineyard has arrived. Instead, their wickedness actually intensifies. After conferring among themselves, they agree to kill the son in order to extort money from the father. What happens next? Jesus tells us in no uncertain terms, it’s going to end very badly for them.

I don’t know about you, but my initial inclination is to stop reading at verse 41 and conclude that Jesus’ parable is another indictment against the Pharisees who seized ownership of the “vineyard” that rightfully belongs to God. It’s certainly true that they made a mess of the temple and exchanged God’s law for their own human-centered traditions (Mark 7:1-13).

But if you continue reading, you’ll notice that Jesus gives us the proper interpretation of his parable by quoting Scripture – specifically Psalm 118:22-23. With this parable, Jesus attacks the Pharisee’s willful rejection of the Son of God. Isn’t that the sin of sins? Isn’t it the root of all sin?

As much as we don’t want to admit it, we are not unlike the religious hypocrites of Jesus’ day (or the heathen Romans for that matter). Scripture tells us that we are all guilty of willful rebellion against God our Creator, and against his beloved Son Jesus Christ. And the consequence for our sin is – in Jesus’ words – to be “broken to pieces” and “crushed” (verse 44). Put another way, we deserve eternity in hell.

But herein is the gospel. On the cross, Jesus endured the punishment we deserve. Instead of us being broken to pieces, “he [Jesus] was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

THE BETRAYAL AGREEMENT

WEDNESDAY
12

Matthew 26:14-16 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.

REFLECT

Here we read about the infamous meeting between Judas Iscariot and the chief priests of Israel. If you’ve read any portion of the Gospel accounts, it should come as no surprise that the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. Throughout Jesus’ ministry he had warned the people of Israel about the Pharisees. Check out how Jesus publicly rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 for their hypocrisy, lawlessness, persecution of God’s prophets, and refusal to recognize him as the prophesied Messiah.

But what might surprise you is Judas’ treachery. Along with the other 10 disciples, Judas had been a companion to Jesus from the beginning of Jesus’ ministry. He had seen all the same incredible miracles, like the blind and lame healed. He’d heard Jesus’ teach time and time again about the kingdom of God and about his identity as the unique Son of God. He was even there when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead.

Despite evidence to the contrary, he refused to believe that Jesus is who he claimed to be – the unique Son of Man. Even though he had lived with Jesus and the others for three years, he was not one of them (John 13:10-11). And as the omnipotent God-man, Jesus knew this. You don’t have to read any further than verse 2 of our passage to see this. He knew his atoning death on the cross lay ahead. But Jesus’ awareness of his impending betrayal and death wasn’t something he simply knew about. It was part of God’s plan even before the foundations of the world were established (Ephesians 1:7-10, Acts 2:23).

Amazingly, this most heinous act of betrayal that would lead to Jesus’ crucifixion was part of God’s plan. Jesus was in control of the events surrounding his death – not Judas and not Satan. Here’s where we marvel at the extent of God’s sovereignty (power). He uses the most wicked intentions and acts of men to accomplish good and to reveal his glory to the world. And that’s precisely what happened on the cross. Where sin was at its worst, God’s glory was most brilliantly revealed.

For years, Judas had been lured by his own sinful desires for “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches” (Matthew 13:22). That’s what led him to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. But God’s plans will not be thwarted. Jesus’ focus was set on accomplishing the God glorifying work of redemption on the cross. And God used Judas’ sin to actually purchase your salvation and to display the greatest act of love the world has ever seen. How will you respond to God’s love for you?

PRAYER & MEDITATION SERVICE

Wednesday, April 12th
7:30pm

READ



Matthew 26:1-16

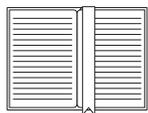
RESPOND

Let Judas’ betrayal be a reminder of your sin. But then remember the gospel, the mysterious plan of God that has been revealed for all to see. Meditate on the good news that God showered you with mercy, grace, and love when you were his enemy. And then praise him for adopting you as a son or daughter with his blood.

Pray: Jesus, I am astounded by your sovereign work on the cross. I’m humbled that you loved me and died for me, a sinner deserving death and hell. You pursued me, and saved me. Help me to seek your glory, repent often of sin, and trust you when sin seems to surround me on all sides. Help me to remember that you are bending the evil around me and shaping it into good: my good and your eternal glory. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Luke 22:41-44 “And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and knelt down and prayed, saying, ‘Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done.’ And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”

READ



Matthew 26:36-46
Mark 14:32-42
Luke 22:39-46
John 18:1

REFLECT

Never has a person in history suffered the emotional torment that Jesus experienced in Gethsemane. (Not coincidentally, Gethsemane literally means “oil press.”) Jesus is moments away from his arrest. And over the next several hours, the innocent and perfect Son of God is going to be cuffed, unjustly tried, publicly beaten and humiliated, and then violently executed. And no one comes to his aid. His disciples can’t even muster the strength to stay awake, let alone pray with him. So he walks “a stone’s throw” further to pray, until he’s alone.

RESPOND

Think about the sufferings that Jesus endured for you. Remember that he didn’t suffer like anyone before or after him. He suffered infinitely more, and accomplished infinitely more – your salvation from sin, Satan, and hell.

Pray: Father, thank you for sending Jesus Christ to earth. He is your beloved Son who existed with you before the world was made. Jesus, thank you for your obedience to the Father which redeemed me from sin, and paid the penalty that I could never pay in a thousand lifetimes. And thank you Holy Spirit for applying Jesus’ atoning work on the cross to my needy soul. In Jesus’ name, amen.

It wasn’t unusual for Jesus to temporarily isolate himself from the world. He would often retreat to desolate places to pray (Luke 5:16). But this time was different. This is the last prayer recorded in the Gospels that Jesus makes before he goes to the cross. His disciples may have fallen asleep, but his Father is with him. His Father hears him. His Father loves him. His Father answers his prayer. He sends an angel to strengthen Jesus’ body and to fortify his resolve to fulfill God’s redemptive plan.

The path before Jesus is arduous. And yes, he’s agonizing over the physical pain that he would soon endure. But more than that, he’s sorrowful and greatly distressed over this fact: for the first time ever, he will be truly alone.

Where we see that most clearly is when our crucified Lord cries out, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34) Rather than enjoying the sweet, blessed presence of his Father, Jesus was for the first time temporarily suffering God’s infinite wrath and judgement. As the prophet Nahum said, “Who can stand before his indignation? Who can endure the heat of his anger? His wrath is poured out like fire, and the rocks are broken into pieces by him” (Nahum 1:6).

No one can withstand the just judgement of God. No one can repay the infinite debt we owe to God for rebellion against him. No one, that is, one except Jesus Christ, the Son of God. And that’s exactly what he did, even though it meant enduring excruciating pain – physically, mentally, emotionally, relationally.

What’s more, he did so willingly in the stead of wretched sinners like you and me. Why? Because it glorifies God the Father. The purpose behind Jesus’ incarnation, his righteous life, his atoning death, and his resurrection from the grave is to display to the world his unmeasured value and worth. On the cross, in one event, we catch sight of Jesus’ love for his Father as well as his love for us. Does that move you to tears? Does it move you to repentance? Does it move you to share this incredible gospel (good news) with others?

THE TWO CRIMINALS & JESUS

Luke 23:39-40 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” [40] But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”

REFLECT

One of the most beautiful scenes where we see the saving power of the gospel is in Luke’s Gospel account. Jesus the perfect and spotless lamb is hanging between two men who are being rightly punished for their crimes. In this interaction we witness the two responses to being confronted with the truth of Jesus’s identity.

The first response is something Jesus was all too familiar with throughout his ministry and definitely during his last days on earth. Mockery. Disbelief. Rejection. This criminal has endured the pain of being nailed to cross, is facing a very certain death, and decides to use some of his final breaths of air to scoff at Jesus. His words echoed the sentiments of those looking on, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” I have no doubt that if Jesus did exactly what was requested, that man would stand amazed and embarrassed testing the Son of Man. Jesus would have provided the proof that they wanted.

But the call of the gospel isn’t that God must prove Himself for every test we give. That’s not what faith is. Hebrews tells us that faith is “the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1) The thief would not believe without proof, without seeing. The truly devastating reality is that we can relate all too often with this man. We expect God to act on our terms and in our ways. That God would prove Himself through our expectations. In what ways can you identify with this criminal?

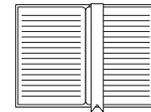
We see a different response from the second criminal. He believes that Jesus is indeed God, and that Jesus was crucified unjustly. He recognizes the consequences of his own sin when he says, “we are receiving the due reward of our deeds.” He’s aware of his wrong doings. And he wasn’t seeking an easy escape from the consequences of his actions. He knew he wasn’t going to make it off the cross. But he knew who he was next to - Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He is the lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world, the One whose death brings life everlasting. And he doesn’t ask for proof. He asks Christ to simply remember him when He enters His kingdom. Jesus saw his faith and gives a seemingly hopeless criminal the hope of eternal life, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Salvation is by grace alone through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). The due reward of our deeds is death (Romans 6:23), but it’s through repentance and faith in Jesus that we are given life. While we were yet sinners, rebelling to His face like the first criminal, Jesus gave himself for us.

GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE

Friday, April 14th
7:30pm

READ



Matthew 27:44
Mark 15:32
Luke 23:39-43

RESPOND

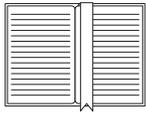
Visit <https://youtu.be/RPcv9O6aSgo> and listen to song “Scarlet” by Ghost Ship. Give praise and thanks to Jesus Christ for loving us when we did nothing to deserve it, and giving us the one thing we could never afford.

Pray: Father, I see my selfish motives and sinful ways. I repent of those things, and I thank you for the love and forgiveness I am shown in Christ. By your Spirit, help me to flee from sin, and draw me nearer to Christ. Remind me of the price that was paid for my sin, and keep me mixed on the hope of dwelling forever and ever with you, amen.

THE SEALING OF THE TOMB

Matthew 27:62-66 The next day, that is, after the day of Preparation, the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered before Pilate and said, “Sir, we remember how that impostor said, while he was still alive, ‘After three days I will rise.’ Therefore order the tomb to be made secure until the third day, lest his disciples go and steal him away and tell the people, ‘He has risen from the dead,’ and the last fraud will be worse than the first.” Pilate said to them, “You have a guard of soldiers. Go, make it as secure as you can.” So they went and made the tomb secure by sealing the stone and setting a guard.

READ



Matthew 27:62-66

REFLECT

Doubt and fear can be funny things. The Pharisees doubted all that Jesus taught about his identity was true. They greatly feared the impact of what would happen if all that Jesus proclaimed came to fruition. Doubt and fear motivated them to put Jesus in the tomb, and doubt and fear is what drove them to make sure he stayed there.

RESPOND

What fear and doubt is plaguing you?

Remind yourself of your identity in

Christ: Forgiven, adopted, alive, saved, justified, redeemed, a citizen of heaven.

Pray: Father in Heaven, I thank you so much for the truth of Your word. In your holy Scriptures, You reveal the wickedness of sin but also love and forgiveness through the gospel. I ask that Your Spirit would compel me to overcome fear, confess and repent of my sin, and rejoice in the forgiveness I have in Christ, amen.

It wasn't enough that Jesus was brutally put to a death on Roman cross. His body had to remain in the grave or else their master plan would be a complete failure. People would see the truth of Jesus's claims, and they would believe in Him. In their doubt the only foreseeable way that Jesus's body would disappear would be through human efforts. The disciples would need to intervene. And they simply couldn't let that happen.

The Pharisee's take their fear and doubt to Pilate, who had hoped the matter with Jesus was over and done with. But Pilate reasons that his guilt for crucifying God would also be exposed if Jesus's body went missing. So, he makes his contribution to the cause by ensuring the tomb is protected.

When we're consumed with fear and doubt, especially over sin, we take matters into our own hands. Too often fear outweighs faith. When fear rears its ugly face, we think it's up to us to calm those fears. Take for example a person blockading a door. First you lock the door. But what if the lock fails? You jam the door with a chair placed under the handle. But what if that doesn't hold? Then you slide a desk in front of the door, then maybe a sofa, and whatever else will make you feel safe from your fears coming to life. However, the reality is no matter how much we do in our own effort, we still have the fear. “What if my blockade falls to pieces?” “What if my greatest fear greets me face to face?” We can't out run the fear. It's long exhausting process.

How often do we doubt the truth of Scripture? The Bible tells us that God is sovereign and all powerful. But when tragedy hits, we have memory loss and forget God's in control. The gospel tells us that in Christ, nothing can separate us from God's love. But we fall into sin and instead of confessing and repenting and embracing Christ's love and forgiveness, we run. We hide ourselves from God in fear as though He has stopped loving us.

Fear and doubt will keep us captive, but Jesus's words in John 8:32 assures us that the truth of the gospel will set us free from bondage to sin. Never our effort. It's only through Christ and embracing the truth of who He is that we find relief from our fears and doubts.

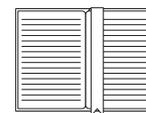
THE TOMB IS EMPTY

Mark 16:5-7 And entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. And he said to them, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen; he is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.”

REFLECT

READ

Yesterday, we looked at the efforts of the Pharisees and Pilate as they made sure that there was no way Jesus left the tomb. They placed guards and they sealed it with the heavy stone. But regardless of their attempt to save face, the power of God trumps human efforts.



Matthew 28:1-8

Mark 16:1-8

Luke 24:1-12

John 20:1-13

When Jesus told them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up,” (John 2:19) the Jews thought it was an impossibility. They thought Jesus was talking about the literal temple which took, according to them, 46 years to build. Here, a few years later, the Pharisees believe another impossibility. It would be impossible for anyone to get past the stone and the guards. You see, when Jesus said he’d raise the temple in three days (which John tells us refers to Jesus’s body) he didn’t qualify that with the statement, “as long as its feasibly possible.” Jesus didn’t say, “I’ll raise the temple up in 3 days as long as you allow me to do so.” Jesus said he would do it.

RESPOND

Visit <https://youtu.be/rFPsyjCnwjU> and listen to song “Because He Lives (Amen)” by Matt Maher. Rejoice in the life you’ve been given because Jesus lives!

The first people to discover that Jesus kept His word were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome. On the third day, they went to the tomb to anoint Jesus’s body as was the custom, since the Sabbath was concluded. They looked on earlier when Jesus was buried, and they knew the tomb was sealed shut. The fact that they were bringing spices to anoint his body showed that they too thought he would still be in the tomb.

Pray: Father, what joy we have in knowing that the grave is empty! Through the resurrection of Your Son we know we can trust You, we know that You’re capable of doing the impossible. Help me to remember the work you’ve done in my life in making me alive with Christ Jesus. Remind me constantly of my salvation, and help to me to share your redeeming love with others, amen.

Thankfully, upon their arrival the stone was rolled away, and the tomb was empty! The young man sitting there tells them, “He has risen; he not here.” The soldiers didn’t prevent God’s plans from happening. The stone didn’t prevent God’s plan from happening. Our efforts to thwart God’s plans never work. God will see His plans through to the end, despite what we deem impossible.

Our testimonies remind us that in Christ, the impossible is made possible. We were once enemies with God, rebellious, callous. Paul tells us that we were “dead in our trespasses and sins.” Looking back we might say, “it seemed impossible that God could love me, and that I would love and follow Jesus.” But the Spirit did the impossible. He rolled the stone away that kept us from seeing the goodness of God and kept us sealed in our sin. He opened our tombs and showed us that we don’t need to stay dead in the grave. There’s life! Because Jesus lives, we can live! “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-7). Relish in that gospel truth today!

EASTER SUNDAY SERVICES

Sunday, April 16th
9:00am & 10:00am