



*An Easter
for
Remembering*

A 40 Day Devotional
by
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An Easter for Remembering

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Reading schedule begins on Ash Wednesday and rests on Sundays

Day One



A Season with Ancient Rhythms

*Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity (Joel 2:13).*

There is a season, leading up to Easter, that has a unique rhythm all its own. A rhythm that has chimed through centuries of celebrating the Risen Christ.

Today we enter that season, cadenced with spiritual rhythms beheld by countless Christians who have gone before us. For the tempo, though ancient, has never lost its verve.

Often, in the season leading up to Easter, when we remember what Jesus suffered, we grieve. We mourn the suffering and death of our precious Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And we mourn our sin and rebellion that made it necessary.

We can, and should, *rend our hearts*—but we can't remain there.

Instead, we can tune the season by remembering. And, in so doing, allow it to do the work of repentance. We can turn, draw near, and allow the gracious Lord to do the work of forgiveness, restoration, and transformation. A work He delights to do . . . to perfection.

As Jesus journeyed the Near East during those unprecedented ministry years, the real work He was doing in the world went unrecognized. In many ways, He was denied rightful praise, adoration, and worship. But the practice of remembering what He accomplished creates opportunity for us to acknowledge and declare in our day that He is God—God of the cosmos, King over all . . . *and Lord of my life*.

But sometimes we find ourselves, as Adam and Eve, stuck in a hiding place. Then, the first thing to remember is that the Lord welcomes your return. There is no such thing as *no turning back*. As long as it is a day, turning is always possible. So, turn now. Turn to the Son, that He may shine on you. Make this season of reflection and remembrance a time to renew and deepen fellowship with Him.

In remembering, remember too that it is a season to celebrate.

Celebrate the gospel. Celebrate the atoning sacrifice and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Celebrate our rescue and restoration. Celebrate His resurrection, His victory over death.

Celebrate the reunification of nations. Celebrate this new life we now live, in freedom and grace. Celebrate the beautiful Body of Christ. Celebrate Him!

It is always a good time to remember the mighty acts of God's lovingkindness. But especially now. For now, in this season of great trial, we need to remember the hope and joy that is ours in the Lord.

So, let's allow Him to resurrect our life in Him . . . for just such a season as this.

Father-God, lead our remembering and proclaiming of Jesus this season—as You have faithfully done for the ancients of the past. Tune our hearts to Your perfect will. And set the season to a rhythm of praise and celebration.

Day Two



A Call to Worship

What a wonderful thing our memory is!

We remember facts. We remember stats and trivia. We remember activities and events. We remember sights and smells. We even remember sounds.

I vividly remember the chant of the psalter, echoing off the marble in the church of my childhood. I remember the sound, more than the actual words. (Maybe because they were in Greek?) It's a liturgy dating back to the 4th century. It was a call to worship.

The call is constant and never fades.

When we rightly remember who God infinitely is, hearts soften and bow—surrendered in reverent worship.

Let the remembrance of the holiness of God mark the opening of our season together.

Today, select an attribute of God to contemplate . . . and so be moved to worship. Join with all of Creation—in heaven and earth—in worship of our Creator.

*Oh come, let us worship and bow down;
let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker!
(Ps 95:6)*

Our lenten days of Easter have begun;
The Light and Life of the world has come!

Pleas for salvation now turn to praise,
As worship songs of love are raised.

Look to the Son—His life and death;
Remember His call to faithfulness.

Remember His words of our cross to bear,
And give to Him each earthly care.

Bow in worship and gratefully adore;
Join the celebration of our Risen Lord!

Great God Almighty, how we long to know You more. Make my life an offering of worship—for all honor and praise is Yours alone, both now and forevermore.

Day Three



An Easter to Remember (And Living Beyond a Pandemic When You're Living in a Pandemic)

March 2020—early in the shutdown, much was unknown and uncertain. Here in Georgia at the time, many people thought the shutdown would last only two weeks. Then three. Three weeks turned into four. Summer came . . . and went. Then Fall. We've now arrived at another marker, one year later.

As Easter neared last year, I remember fretting about the unthinkable possibility that the church building would still be closed when Easter Sunday rolled around. Gloom loomed at the realization that in-person services would have to be cancelled.

Hope battled hard. But that's what hope does best.

I'm not saying that the thoughts running through my head held any theological validity. But thoughts that something dark and sinister was at work against the global church persisted. Especially if circumstances robbed our Savior of rightful worship.

But a determination also persisted. Come what may, I resolved to rise with the sun and celebrate the Risen Lord.

I rose with the dawn and stepped out on my back patio. The sky utterly praised the glory of its Creator. And I wept exultant worship. Faith remembered that Christ was still risen. Earth's King reigned. No matter the circumstance.

Later, I joined the online service. And, just like the experience I mentioned yesterday about remembering sounds, I closed my eyes in song and remembered the sound of my church family in worship. In my mind's eye, I saw their faces around the sanctuary. It brought comfort . . . courage. And only added to my worship—realizing the global people of God were united in Spirit in celebrating our King.

A year later, perseverance is still doing its work. And recalling lessons learned along the way help to that end.

We know more about the virus. But, as for uncertainty? Well, hasn't uncertainty about the future always been a reality? But, hopefully, the reeling has stopped.

One benefit of remembering last Easter is the way it can inform our perspective toward this Easter. Because we can now hold on to what we learned.

What did you learn from living through a pandemic state last year that makes you stronger for it again this year?

I recall learning that God is God; Christ is risen; Easter is still Easter—and **nothing** can change that.

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever
(Heb 13:8).*

This truth informs faith. It is to be celebrated. Lived. Because it propels us to live above the pandemic. Beyond it.

Our life in the Christ of Easter anchors us to live steadily beyond our changing circumstances.

We cannot hope in the things of this ever-changing life. But beyond it.

Though perplexed, hard-pressed, and struck down (2 Cor 4:8), the Apostle Paul, a hero of our faith, rejoiced in hope. But remember what he said? *We do not lose heart* (2 Cor 4:16). He went on to say, *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal* (2 Cor 4:17-18).

There is more to life than meets the eye. Fix faith there.

Easter, though coming in trying times, is untainted by it. It is inoculated from calamity. It's still Easter. Because Jesus is still Jesus. His victory over death is just as real. And He is just as alive in this pandemic as otherwise. And our Hosannas rise above it, to a risen and reigning King.

Sovereign God, when this changing life assaults faith, help me to remember that You are unchanging, constant, and ever-present. When times are hard, and celebration is a chore, remind my heart that it's all for You.

Day Four



Remembering in Advent

In this advent season of Easter, let's keep remembering God's Beloved Son. And keep reminding faith that we are living in the advent of His return.

Infuse your heart today with the remembrance of this:

*How priceless is your unfailing love!
Both high and low among men
find refuge in the shadow of your wings.
They feast on the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from your river of delights.
For with you is the fountain of life;
in your light we see light
(Ps 36:7-9).*

Remember:

- God's love is unfailing
- He is a refuge for all
- In abundance He provides
- To drink in His delights, streaming from the heavens
- The Fount of Light and Life of His Son

Remember to shine His light into dark places around you. Bring into your sphere of influence the light of His grace. The light of hope. The light of His mercies, ever-new.

Allow His light to shine on those things of faith that have been temporarily misplaced—pushed behind the clamoring circumstances vying for dominance.

Pilate inquired, *What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?*

What will **you** do with Jesus?

Bring your answer into His light. Commit to it. To Him. And let discipleship mark this season of advent.

Fount of Life, I rejoice in Your unfailing love. And I ask for You to shine Your light into my heart and help me to see how to live out my discipleship in this advent of Your return. May it visibly mark my days, all my days—by daily remembering to live for You.



Events from the Beginning Worth Remembering

Beginnings are important to remember. So today, let's remember—from the beginning.

- In the beginning was God and His Christ and the Spirit hovering over the deep (1). They were in perfect unity, before time began. And all They created was good (2).

Let's remember that . . .

- He brought about order. And into the darkness He brought light (3).

Let's remember that . . .

- We are made in His image (4). For He breathed life into Adam (5) . . . for purpose (6).

Let's remember that . . .

- God blessed mankind (7) and graced bountiful provision (8).

Let's remember that . . .

- We are susceptible to the enticements of the evil one, to partake of that which is forbidden, or prone to follow after my own selfish desires (9).

Let's remember . . .

- When I disobey the word of the Lord, I shouldn't run away from Him or try to hide (10). That is precisely the time when I need most to turn to Him (11), without excuse or blame (12)—and so be covered by His grace (13).

Let's remember . . .

- Elohiym. And the fullness of His power to create the cosmos.

In these opening chapters of history's beginning, let's remember together God's glory and goodness. His promise and provision. And so let Him capture our hearts anew with wonder.

Elohiym, along with the totality of all You created in heaven and earth, You also created order, relationship, and assigned onto humans purpose (14)—with such significance I, too, am blessed. I am especially blessed for remembering. May the

display of Your majesty, glory, and power in creation dethrone any desire in my heart that is not of You.

- 1 - Gen 1:2
- 2 - Gen 1:31
- 3 - Gen 1:3
- 4 - Gen 1:26
- 5 - Gen 2:7
- 6 - Gen 1:26; 2:15
- 7 - Gen 1:28
- 8 - Gen 1:29
- 9 - Gen 3:6
- 10 - Gen 3:8
- 11 - Gen 3:10
- 12 - Gen 3:12ff
- 13 - Gen 3:21
- 14 - Gen 1:2; 2:18, 15



The Great Flood Remembered

I find that practicing what I'm calling a spiritual discipline of remembrance-through-scripture actively lives out Paul's admonition to not *receive God's grace in vain* (2 Cor 6:1). Because remembering who God is, who I am, and just how much I daily need His grace, helps to keep the gospel at the forefront of my mind.

Today's remembrance takes us to the record of the Great Flood. This account gives us great insight into God's holiness, power, and hatred of sin. It reveals portions of His character and will. And invokes both reverence and repentance.

Sometimes we lose sight of just how serious it is to turn our backs on God and live in disobedience. It is also easy to forget God's holy and just wrath. So remembering these Old Testament events can renew our minds to those realities.

The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled (Gen 6:5-6).

In the time of Noah, God became so grieved with mankind because of their sin and rebellion that He chose not to hold back His righteous anger any longer. However, while cleansing the earth of evil, God also extended mercy in choosing not to totally destroy all of creation. He spared Noah, his family, the earth, and each animal species. He graciously granted mankind another chance.

I encourage you to take time to read the incredible account of The Great Flood (Genesis 6-9). In so doing, consider these five points:

1. Noah's account serves as warning. God proved that He is true to His word. It is still relevant today, for Jesus has said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man" (Mt 24:37).
2. Noah serves as our example of faith and the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ Jesus. "By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith" (Heb 11:7).
3. Noah serves as our encouragement. We are encouraged by Noah. Even though he was surrounded by wickedness, he remained faithful to God. Though the world was corrupt around him, he did not conform to it. He lived in

obedience and in relationship with God. It is possible—more so, this side of the Cross and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

4. Noah serves as a model of God's grace, as set before us in Ephesians 2:8: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God." God saved him because of His grace responding to Noah's faith.

5. Just as the occurrence of the flood was a renewal for the earth, for creation, and for mankind, so too does repentance spawn God's renewal. Every time we repent, our hearts are renewed. God renews our spirit with His Holy Spirit. Every time we open the Bible our minds are renewed. Every time we forgive, we renew our relationships. It was, in a sense, a re-creation—a type for the new creation we become when cleansed and reborn in Christ.

God demonstrated His judgment, justice, power, and wrath through the Great Flood. But God also demonstrated His patience (waiting for the completion of the ark), His love (for what He created), and His grace (to save). Mostly, He showed His tremendous desire for a covenant relationship with mankind.

Covenant, now there's something to remember. And celebrate this season.

Our Covenant-Making and Covenant-Keeping God, You have so much to teach us and we have so very much to learn. Renew our minds by Your life-giving Word. As we turn our hearts to you, bring about the cleansing that brings refreshing and renewal.

Day Seven



Remembering the Problem of Pride

*For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh,
the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—
comes not from the Father but from the world (1Jn 2:16).*

It had been decided that we would add-on an in-law suite to the house, so my recently widowed father-in-law could move in with us. The construction was more than we bargained for. But for the kids, it was a grand adventure.

I remember one day in particular, they were quite young at the time, when we had given them a chore to pick up some scraps on the ground (a ruse to pre-occupy them while we were working on another project). As you would have it, we turned our back but for a moment and they quickly busied themselves with their own grand scheme. They apparently decided that the job we had given them was much too insignificant. They had a bigger plan in mind. So they climbed up on the forbidden platform and started building on their own.

Their young minds didn't see the folly of their actions. Fortunately, nothing disastrous happened. They were caught, just in the nick of time. I disciplined them with a time out. One, for disobeying. And two, for arguing about it afterward.

[pics of kids]

Humans are often stubborn . . . willful . . . and proud. To a fault. Case in point: The Tower of Babel.

Even though it's a quick read (found in Genesis 11:1-9), I won't paste the entire account here (just a few highlights). It's a fascinating read, to be sure. And it teaches us much about the human psyche.

God had instructed humans, on more than one occasion, *to fill the earth* (Gen 1:28; 9:1). They weren't to remain all huddled up in one region. But, rather than follow God's direction, they wanted *to make a name for themselves* (Gen 11:4). So, they willfully decided to build a tower, *otherwise they might be scattered over the face of the whole earth* (Gen 11:4), in direct opposition to God's will.

But the Lord came down to see what they were up to (Gen 11:5). He could hardly overlook their offense. As any good parent knows, you can't simply look the other way when you've been disobeyed. Disobedience, left unchecked, often leads to a greater offense. If you look the other way, there's no end to what can happen next time. Who

would know that better than God? So *the Lord scattered them* (Gen 11:8). His will being done, regardless of the sinful efforts of humans.

The Good Father stepped in and made them speak in different languages—complicating communication to prevent future conspiring. But, where there once was unity, there came a division-creating obstacle. (Yet another result of the Fall for God to reverse when He would renew all things.)

You don't have to turn very many pages in the Bible to read several other accounts of blatant and willful disobedience. It's the plague of choice.

Something for us to remember . . . as we make our way to Easter. Because that's what made Easter necessary.

Father, Your patience toward us is astounding. As is Your goodness and grace. Forgive my stubborn pride. But, more than that, transform me. Make me new. And help me to make better, God-honoring choices.

Day Eight



Remembering What's Greater

Now there was a famine in the land, and Abram went down to Egypt to live there for a while because the famine was severe. As he was about to enter Egypt, he said to his wife Sarai, "I know what a beautiful woman you are. When the Egyptians see you, they will say, 'This is his wife.' Then they will kill me but will let you live. Say you are my sister, so that I will be treated well for your sake and my life will be spared because of you" (Gen 12:10-13)

Abram worried about what man could do to him . . . and forgot God was for him.

He had gone down to Egypt to avoid a famine—only to run head-on into a famine of faith, a feasting upon anxious worry.

Out of fear for the Egyptians, Abram discredited God's providence, forsaking integrity in the process.

Earlier, God made a covenant with Abram. Recorded in Genesis 12:3 and following, God promised to bless those who bless Abram and curse those who curse him. I'm not sure how much time lapsed in the span of verse 3 to verse 10, but his memory definitely lapsed. It's not uncommon, however, to suffer faith amnesia when fear kicks in. Hence the importance of remembering—remembering rightly Who and what to fear.

Peter and John remembered.

*But Peter and John replied,
"Which is right in God's eyes:
to listen to you, or to him?"
(Ac 4:19a)*

Peter and John knew to be more concerned about obeying God than man. (Yes, even **those** men.) Even though those same men had them arrested. Even though those same men crucified their Lord. Even though those men wielded all the weapons that provoke fear.

But God was the Greater to be feared. For *what can man do to me?* Really?

Their question was not "What if they," but "What if God."

They remembered God is sovereign and *the people plot in vain* (see Ac 4:24, 25).

History is keeper of the truth that whenever the people of God didn't fear God, they abandoned Him. That's when there is real cause to fear—because a godless life is a fearful life.

That great, big thing you're facing? Remember, something else is greater still. Because Someone else is greater still.

“What if they” is a timeless question, spiraling since the dawn of time. It's a worrisome question . . . a fearful question . . . a faith-robbing, God-discounting question. It is a question I have asked myself more times that I can count, unfortunately. The problem with it is the “they.” Because to fear “them” is to remove God. Might the weightier fear be the one of a daughter disappointing the Father she desperately loves? And longs to honor?

We mustn't cower under “what if.” And certainly not “what if they.” Instead, remember God. Then, wisdom, faith, and courage will follow.

Remember what God has said concerning you. And, by all means, *remember the word of the Lord* (Ac 11:16).

God, give me faith greater than my fear. When I am intimidated by others, help me to trust in You and remain faithful.



The One Who Most Remembers

Don't you *love* to be remembered?

Doesn't it just warm your heart when someone remembers your birthday? Thinks of you when you're sick? Remembers to pray for you? Or sends you an encouraging word? Especially in these days of distancing, quarantine, and isolation?

When the elderly receive mail where I work, they are so over-joyed—to not be forgotten.

How much more uplifting is it to be remembered by God?

*But God remembered
(Gen 8:1)*

God remembered Noah (Gen 8:1).

God remembered Abraham (Gen 19:29).

God remembered Rachel (Gen 30:22).

God remembered His covenant (Ex 2:24).

God remembered Babylon (Rev 16:19).

God remembered them.

And He remembers you.

Ever will you remain near and dear to His heart. Remember that—should you feel alone . . . forsaken . . . forgotten. That's not what God wants for you. He wants you to remember that He remembers.

God remembers His every promise. And He remembers you.

You are our God Who never forgets. Not one of Your children fall from Your watchful oversight. Tenderly remind each one that You are a faithful Father.

Day Ten



What to Remember and What Not to Forget—Lessons from Egypt, Part I

*Therefore, say to the Israelites: "I am the LORD,
and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.
I will free you from being slaves to them,
and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm
and with mighty acts of judgment"
(Ex 6:6).*

Their time in Egypt held many hardships for the Hebrews. But it also help provided many life lessons for them. And God's deliverance of the people held even more.

God had much to teach these people, as He formed their nation. And much of that instruction included His commands for them to remember.

They were to remember the hard lessons learned by their oppression.

They were to remember the great lengths to which God went to save them.

They were to remember His dazzling display of power in defeating their enemy and breaking the yoke of their captivity.

All this remembering serves us well, too.

The importance? The opening books of the Bible are devoted to it. An element to the Torah is about remembering God's participation in the lives of His creatures.

It's astounding just how often God tells the Israelites to *remember* in Deuteronomy alone (in one form or another). So many in fact, the few I have selected are more that one day's read. So I've divvied them up over the next couple of days—to allow time to really meditate upon them. Learn from them.

Begin by slowly considering these two:

*Be careful that you do not forget the LORD,
who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery
(Dt 6:12).*

*Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way
in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you
in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would
keep his commands
(Dt 8:2).*

God impressed upon His people the importance of remembering. Two points in particular to ponder today are their past enslavement and proclivity to fear.

Past enslavement

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today (Dt 5:15; 15:15).

Hear these words in their context. Realize their application to that audience. Then consider its relevance to the Christian today.

Why is it important for us to remember this event? How does it impact my relationship with Jesus?

Were we not also once held captive? Slaves to our sinful nature? But we have been freed by Christ. And we are now kept by Holy Spirit power. However, forgetting this holds the potential of falling back into the chains of past masters. The Israelites went back into captivity several times—because they forgot their redeeming God.

Warning against fear

You may say to yourselves, 'These nations are stronger than we are. How can we drive them out?' But do not be afraid of them; remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt. You saw with your own eyes the great trials, the miraculous signs and wonders, the mighty hand and outstretched arm, with which the LORD your God brought you out. The LORD your God will do the same to all the peoples you now fear (Dt 7:17-19).

Fear is a paralyzing faith-robber. It is a thief of all things Christ came to accomplish in our lives through faith. And it masks itself in many guises. It can weaken our legs, tighten our throat, and put sweat on our brow. However, remembering God's past deliverance keeps faith strong, courage bold, gratitude flowing, and confidence alive.

Tomorrow I'll share a few more verses from Deuteronomy, where remembering Egypt was to be a part of the faith-life of God's people.

God, Your deliverance is to be praised . . . remembered. As is Your instruction. Give me a soft heart to hear and heed.



What to Remember and What Not to Forget—Lessons from Egypt, Part II

Remembering Egypt held value for the people of God—as noted in yesterday's post.

Today we'll look at a few more instructions from God from the Book of Deuteronomy. Consider these three points that have application for us today:

Remaining idol-free

Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden (Dt 4:23).

We live in covenant with our Lord and are called to remain faithful to Him. Remembering God is a jealous God (Dt 5:9) is to remind ourselves of the depth of His love and longing for relationship. The greatest threat to our heart's devotion are idols, those things that rob God of our adoration and attention.

How many idols are we confronted with daily? What cultural competitors attempt to divide your heart and vie for your allegiance over sole affection for Jesus? Identify them. And steer clear.

Recognizing our propensity to rebellion

Remember this and never forget how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the desert. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. At Horeb you aroused the LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you (Dt 9:7-8).

The Israelites were often called, by God, *stiff-necked*. They wanted things done their way, in their timing? This stubbornness led to disobedience.

Sound familiar? This human propensity warrants frequent reminders.

Being identity-conscious

For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. Out of all the peoples on the face of the earth,

*the LORD has chosen you to be his treasured possession
(Dt 14:2).*

Have you forgotten who you are in Christ?

It is a faith-building practice to remember who you are in Him. You are a treasured child of God and an ambassador of Christ. The reminder not only builds confidence, it gives you a sense of belonging and purpose. It aligns values, attitudes, behaviors, and priorities.

Our identity as His is life-giving . . . and valuable beyond measure.

God deemed it necessary to instruct His people to remember. Much of what they were to remember kept their minds focused on their relationship with Him.

How might remembering these same things do the same in your relationship with Jesus?

Remembering kept God's people on track to the promised land—lest they forgot Egypt.

Father God, as I walk with You, teach me what I need to learn and remember from Old Testament books like Deuteronomy.

Day Twelve



The Passover Was About Remembering

Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants. When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, observe this ceremony. And when your children ask you, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" then tell them, "It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians" (Ex 12:24-27a).

Passover was not merely a one-time event. That first Passover, in Egypt, marked a beginning—the beginning of a new nation, a new life, and a new identity. So it was to mark the beginning of their year—every year thereafter.

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted by God as annual feasts for His people so *all the days of your life you remember* (Dt 16:3). Moses reiterated the words of God to the elders in this way: "This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand" (Ex 13:9).

For well over three thousand years, Jews have remembered to keep God's command. Multitudes remember still.

It has summarily been remembered in this way . . .

Once the gathering has been seated, the paterfamilias recites the first prayer of sanctification, the *kiddush*: "Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. You, O Lord our God, have given us festival days for joy, this feast of unleavened bread, the time of our deliverance in remembrance of the departure from Egypt. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to enjoy this season."

Throughout the course of the meal four cups are raised, accompanied by an *I will* statement of God (from Exodus 6:6-8).

Remembered with the first cup, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians."

The paterfamilias prays over the second cup and recites, "I will deliver you from your bondage."

There is then a prayer and blessing over the breaking of the bread. With the third cup another prayer, then the third *I will* of God: "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."

The fourth cup is also accompanied by another prayer of blessing. Then the father recites, "I will take you as my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians." This is followed by signing psalms from the *Hallel*.

And so it has been . . . for thousands of years.

*Jesus sent Peter and John, saying,
"Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover"
(Lk 22:8).*

Every year He remembered.

John records all three Passovers Jesus observed during his ministry years. But at His final Passover meal, Jesus, the Passover Lamb, switched up the command. He made it new.

The Passover feast revealed God's will for redemption. Jesus pointed to those same symbols in His last Passover and revealed His will for redemption—for all.

It's worth remembering. Because the Lord of the Passover is worth remembering—as is His accomplishment of the *I wills* of our God.

Father-God, You said You would redeem Your people and You did. And You asked them to remember it all their days—but they didn't always. Our Lord said He would redeem us . . . and He did. And He has asked that we remember until He returns. I pray we faithfully do . . . every day.

Day Thirteen



Moving From Craving to Satisfied

The rabble with them began to crave other food, and again the Israelites started wailing and said, "If only we had meat to eat!"

Moses heard the people of every family wailing, each at the entrance to his tent. The LORD became exceedingly angry, and Moses was troubled.

Now a wind went out from the LORD and drove quail in from the sea. It brought them down all around the camp to about three feet above the ground, as far as a day's walk in any direction. All that day and night and all the next day the people went out and gathered quail. No one gathered less than ten homers. Then they spread them out all around the camp. But while the meat was still between their teeth and before it could be consumed, the anger of the LORD burned against the people, and he struck them with a severe plague. Therefore, the place was named Kibroth Hattaavah¹, because there they buried the people who had craved other food. From Kibroth Hattaavah the people traveled to Hazeroth and stayed there (Nu 11:4, 10; 31-35).

The masses moved from Kibroth Hattaavah to Hazeroth. From *Graves of Craving to Enclosed*.

The world has a way of generating an empty tomb feeling within, doesn't it? But living in Christ generates a satisfied fullness—because we are enclosed in God's all-sufficient grace.

This season leading up to Easter, widely considered a season of repentance from worldly wants and desires, has the potential to move the Christian too from *Graves of Craving to Enclosed*—by living in the fullness of Christ Jesus.

From humanity's first days, want has marred the human condition. Every generation since the first has faced a relentless temptation—compelled by the lust of our hearts. But only by choice to act upon those ungodly temptations do we sin.

The Book of Numbers clearly records the plight of the Hebrews. And their discontentment. They complained that the manna God provided wasn't good enough. They were unsatisfied. They wanted more . . . *different*. Their complaining spirit showed contempt for God, to which He became exceedingly angry (Nu 11:10). Grumbling against His gift, in essence, was a form of rejection.

God gratified their desire for meat—in great abundance. He granted their request . . . and they indulged to their own ruin.

In remembering this event today, what lessons can be applied to our walk with the Lord?

What desire is causing discontentment in your life? Or dissatisfaction with God?

In remembering, we might do well to remember the call of Scripture: To reckon self as dead to our sinful nature (ref Rm 6:11-12). Bury those cravings . . . before they bury your contentment.

1) BibleGateway.com footnote: *Kibroth Hattaavah* means *graves of craving*

Good and gracious God, grumbling hurts You, Father. Forgive me and fill me with a thankfulness that bears the fruit of contentment. Give me power to let go of my wants of this world. Chasing after desires contrary to Your provision leaves me unsatisfied and wanting for more. By the power of the Spirit, help me put to death the bottomless grave lurking in this craving heart and enclose me in Your perfect, satisfying love.

Day Fourteen



Remembering the Law

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'Do not commit adultery,' 'Do not murder,' 'Do not steal,' 'Do not covet,' and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Rm 13:8-10).

In our remembering, we're traveling through the Old Testament and letting our minds rest at milestones along the way. And as we journey toward Easter, we're letting our hearts rest in the Christ we celebrate this season.

Today's remembering brings us to the Law. It's a stop we must take because of its significance in God's plan.

I don't know, in our time and locale, that we can fully appreciate all the law represents. But it is to be remembered nonetheless because of its meaning in the foundational formation of the nation from which the Messiah would descend.

The law was intended to be a civil code for the community of God's people. Hebrew tradition holds that the law is more than commandments. It is all of God's revelation of moral and civil codes and the ceremonial system of external behaviors. It includes all the statutes, precepts, and testimonies held in the entire Pentateuch. These instructions were embraced by the Israelites. They were not considered a list of cold, impertinent rules.

From the Psalms (19 and 119 specifically) it is clear that the law of God was seen as God's gift to impart blessing. It was central to a relationship with God and brought a unique delight to one's life.

However, we do learn from the prophets that it would not be a permanent system. The writer of Hebrews states that the law was but a *shadow of good things yet to come* (Heb 10:1).

The religious leaders and Pharisees believed man could keep the law, creating even more rules to aid toward that end. Jesus, however, spoke of a righteousness that surpassed the Pharisees. A righteousness from Him, compelled by love. He further taught that the law was not a means to righteousness, because only He is our righteousness (Php 3:9).

The teachings of Jesus in the Beatitudes plunged deeper. They dealt with internal motives over external behaviors and ritualistic religious systems. His was a matter of the heart.

One message within the good news of the kingdom is that Jesus came to fulfill the law. Not only did Jesus fulfill the law and set a new pattern (Mt 5:17), He set us free from the condemnation that came by the law.

Paul also taught that the law was good (Rm 7:12) but that it condemns us. The fact that we fall short of keeping the law is what points us to our need for Jesus—for salvation can never be earned.

However, in the spirit of the law is a way we can grow in Christ-like character. But only in union with the Spirit. The Spirit produces the desire, the will, and the ability to live transformed lives. And He produces the fruit of love for our fellowman which fulfills the law (Rm 13:10). To which we are indebted.

The law—handed down in love, followed in love, expressed in love—has been fulfilled in love. The perfect love of Jesus Christ.

Yet another reason to celebrate Him at every remembrance.

Deal with your servant according to your love and teach me your decrees. I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes (Ps 119:124-125).



They Wore Stones of Remembrance

Another important juncture in the timeline of Israel's history is the birth of the priesthood.

Exodus contains the revelation of God in Word and deed for this sacred inauguration (as do other books that follow in the Pentateuch).

Aaron, brother to Moses, was given the high and holy calling from God to serve as the first in a long line of Levitical priests. He was to be crowned with a seal, a crucial reminder: *Holy to the Lord* (Ex 39:30). But the particular item I want us to be mindful of today is that of the *stones of remembrance*.

*And you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod,
as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel.
And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord on his
two shoulders for remembrance (Ex 28:12 ESV).*

This served as a visual memorial. There were a great many practices God instituted to serve as a memorial (holy feasts, ritual offerings, and sacred object, to name a few) which tells me that remembering is a big deal to God. In fact, remembering might not only be considered an act of obedience, but one of worship.

Are you moved to worship when you remember the merciful and mighty acts of God in the lives of His sons and daughters?

The High Priest acted as a mediator between God and His people. He was a representative for his fellow citizens before God. But he also represented God to them.

The Priest bore the names of his ancestral brothers before God. He wore them in remembrance. Now, graven upon the palms of the hands of God's eternal High Priest too are names. And the scars Jesus bears are indeed a sacred reminder.

God gave His people their identity at the base of Mt. Sinai. They were to be a *kingdom of priests, a holy nation* (Ex 19:6), just as Christ-followers today have been similarly id'd a *royal priesthood, a holy nation* (1 Pt 2:9).

Ephods may be outdated, but holiness isn't. And intercession never goes out of style either. Just ask Jesus—since He *lives to make intercession for those who draw near to God* (Heb 7:25).

Aaron bore the names of his people before God. As should disciples, priests of Christ Jesus. We should bear the names of our brothers and sisters in Christ before God and compassionately shoulder their burdens in His presence. We may not wear a gold plate with engraved gemstones on our shoulders, but we can take our church bulletins and our prayer lists to our knees and remember them before God in prayer—because He is always sure to remember.

Lord our God, the role of priest, as one holy to the Lord, is who and what I am in You. As one who intercedes for Your loved ones, I bring before You these names, trusting in Your mercy: _____



When Seeing Prompts a Reminder

Have you ever seen something and suddenly remembered some other unrelated thing?

It's as if something visual sends a spark across the brain, which fires up the remembering part of your brain. (*I'm pretty sure that's not a scientific explanation. But that doesn't mean it's not real, right?*) I'm not sure exactly how that works, but I think it's likely that you can relate to the sensation.

It usually happens quite suddenly . . . unexpectedly. And awkwardly! Know why? Because you suddenly remember something you don't even remember forgetting.

It's how God wired us. And He knows that full well.

So, you've probably figured out by now that I'm a visual person. It's a trait that carries over into my spiritual life. I attribute this in part to my religious upbringing. We were surrounded by icons. Not to worship . . . but **remember**. To remember the God-event behind what's depicted. To this day I choose to surround myself with visual reminders of my identity in Christ.

God provided an assortment of visual prompters for the Israelites. The sacrificial system He instituted with them was a very tangible one—filled with sights, sounds, and smells. I think possibly it's because He knows that where eyes wander, hearts often follow.

In Numbers 15, God gave them yet another prompt.

*The Lord said to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them:
'Throughout the generations to come you are to make tassels on
the corners of your garments, with a blue cord on each tassel.
You will have these tassels to look at and so you will remember
all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and
not prostitute yourselves by chasing after the lusts of your own hearts and eyes.
Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to
your God (Nu 15:37-40).*

In wearing the vestments of their priesthood, a simple blue tassel was meant to remind them to obey. This little item served a big purpose. With each notice of that tassel, they were to remember God's commands and call to live consecrated lives. Keeping their eyes on something tangible was meant to spark a reminder not to give their hearts away.

Where shall we set our sights?

The world's a stage filled with reminders of what God has said . . . and done. Determine to use the physical as faith-prompters, if necessary. Use sites about you as

- Reminders of His expectancy for obedience
- Reminders to live set apart from the world
- Reminders to adorn the heart with vestments of the Lord's priesthood—the Fruit of the Spirit

Here are a few examples to help find that spark:

When you gaze upon the sun,
Remember the light of His written Word.

When you gaze upon the trees,
Remember the Cross and the call to deny self.

When you gaze upon the ground,
Remember we are stewards to tend it.

When you gaze upon the sparrow,
Remember God's faithful provision and be generous.

Fix your gaze upon God's majesty all around,
Remembering your Holy Father is ever-present.

When your eyes of faith need to remember the unseen things of God, look for a tangible visual aid God provides—even if it is something as simple as a small, blue tassel.

God, I set my gaze upon the eternal kingdom of God and the Author of our faith—for the things we see now will soon be gone, but the things we cannot see will last forever (2 Cor 4:18).

Day Seventeen



Remembering Rahab

*By faith the prostitute Rahab,
because she welcomed the spies,
was not killed with those who were disobedient
(Heb 11:31).*

In the plains of Jericho, a gentile harlot heard of the Hebrew's God . . . and believed. She believed theirs was a living God who parted the sea and defeated neighboring kings.

Before prophets spoke the words from God that a Messiah would come, she believed.

What can we learn by remembering Rahab?

From Rahab we learn of patience. How long **did** she wait? From the time she hid the spies on her roof until their return, how long did that cord for deliverance and protection hang from her window? Some scholars say as much as three weeks.

Imagine that first day the priests marched around the fortress carrying the Ark of the Lord. They never attempted to enter the city gate. They marched . . . and left. Then, again, the next day. And the next. For six days she saw them come . . . *and go*.

She waited. She hoped. By faith, she endured.

And hers was a faith that brought about righteousness. James wrote, "In the same way, was not even Rahab the prostitute considered righteous for what she did when she gave lodging to the spies and sent them off in a different direction?" (Jas 2:25). Though a sinner, she had faith that moved her to act rightly.

Hers was the faith-in-action James referred to in 2:17-18. She heard, she believed, she acted. She involved herself in the plan of God. She hid the men and she covered for them. (Risky!) She diverted the search team. (Bravely!) She negotiated for her family. (Boldly!) She obeyed their instruction for a visible sign. She gathered her loved ones together. She waited. All verbs spawned by faith.

Remembering Rahab is to recognize her concern that salvation was granted to her family. She was not content with only her own salvation. For her to be satisfied with her salvation meant her family also had to be saved.

Scarlet flowed down,

Walls fell down;
She was given a new start,
A new life in the family of God.
She left that old, sinful life behind,
to be interjected into the line of the Messiah.

Can you see any parallels in her story with yours?

God placed Rahab's story on eternal pages—that we might remember that He came to save sinners who believe . . . and act accordingly.

Sovereign Lord; Give me a faith so bold as Rahab's, with patience to wait and concern for the salvation of others—all the while trusting You with the new life You have graced.

Day Eighteen



Men Pointing Forward

Many great men served both God and man through the ages spanning the Old Testament era. There were the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses. The priests, beginning with Aaron. Don't forget the kings (*who doesn't love David?*). And the prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, to name a few. They were mediators. Go-betweens for a holy God unto an unholy people.

The patriarchs, priest, kings, and prophets were common men, chosen and called by God to step into a less-than-favorable role. They served as mediators, conveying God's covenant message. They prefigured a greater Mediator to come. They pointed forward to Jesus.

*For there is one God and one mediator
between God and men,
the man Christ Jesus
(1 Tm 2:5).*

Jesus is the only perfect mediator. He's the Mediator of a new and better covenant. A superior covenant, says the author of Hebrews (Heb 8:6).

Easton's Bible Dictionary defines a mediator as *a person who mediates, especially between parties at variance; an intercessor; to intervene between two disputing parties; reconciles differences; one who acts as a medium of communication between two contracting parties.*

Goodness surely knows that our varying differences with God needed to be reconciled. Humanity is most definitely in dire need of a mediator—for a mediator is the only way back to the Father.

These men could not reconcile man to God. They could not remove the enmity that existed. They could not bridge the great divide that kept us eternally separated. Thankfully, God instituted a new and better covenant, secured for us by Jesus Christ, through the grace of a merciful God. He is the Mediator who could!

Today, let's remember the men in various roles down through history who ushered in a new and more perfect way. The Way. And remember our compassionate, merciful, and trustworthy Mediator, interceding on our behalf before God.

Lord Jesus, we give thanks that in this era we have One who reconciled us to God and met the requirements of a covenant we could not otherwise meet. Thank You for the new covenant You bought with Your life. We give thanks for the rich heritage of this family-of-faith and the history preserved for our edification.

Day Nineteen



The Power and the Beauty of the Psalms in History

*I will remember the deeds of the Lord;
yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago.
I will consider all your works
and meditate on all your mighty deeds
(Ps 77:11-12).*

From their exile, the community of God's people used the psalms for prayer . . . for liturgical worship . . . *for remembrance.*

In troubled times, they remembered the deeds of God in their history. And hope was fueled to praise and perseverance. Because remembering exercises faith and fuels hope.

The gathered people of God retold the history of Israel in poetic form. The historical psalms (ex: Ps 78, 105, 106, 135, 136) recall the saving acts of God—and the people responded with thanksgiving and praise. They recall their sin, rebellion, and folly—and made opportunity for confession and repentance.

Their common identity and shared historical experience united them . . . in worship.

The psalms were sung communally. They were prayed in community . . . **for** community.

The people of God remembered their history with God. Because when they forgot, they rebelled (Ps 106:7).

We, too, have quite a significant and rich history with God. Not just Israel can state that claim—but Christians as well. They are not necessarily distinct. For their history, the history of Israel as God's community, melds into . . . expands . . . and continues.

We (a collective we) can, and should, also remember our history.

The collective Body of Christ can also remember the active dealings of the Trinity throughout the history of the Church. A vibrant history which includes the empowering of the apostles, the spread of the gospel, and explosive growth of the kingdom. It includes the grafting of Gentile and Jew. It includes the mission of the Lord being accomplished through oppression, persecution, and martyrdom—across the globe, over centuries . . . and centuries.

The collective Body of Christ remembers together what Jesus did, and continues to do, with every Lord's Supper.

And when we remember, we tell the next generation (Ps 78:4).

I love the times (like anniversary celebrations) when our congregation retells the history of God forming our family unit. When we remember how God planted us, helped us to grow, and used us to bless the surrounding community across the decades. It is God-honoring to do so.

We can remember our own personal stories of God's deliverance and sanctification. That is a worthy thing to do. But to do so **as the Body**, leads us to worship with the powerful, exuberant praise of the psalms. As Eugene Peterson penned in *Answering God*, "If we confine ourselves to one-generational knowledge here, or even worse, to our own conversion-experience, we are impoverished beyond reason."

Remember, praying these same psalms has united the hearts of the exiled Israelites, the apostles and early disciples, founding church fathers, other Christians across the globe . . . with Jesus. And they help us remember the history of God's people—to praise Him all the more.

Thank You, loving Father, that You have given us the psalms for individual prayer. But, as intended, they are so much more powerful in community. Unite us in praise and remembrance of You.

Day Twenty



Remembering Our Father's Response

*I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.
Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding but must be controlled
by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.
Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the man who trusts in him
(Ps 32:8-10).*

Psalm 32, considered a penitential psalm, teaches much about the effects of sin, the benefits of confession, and God's forgiveness.

When read as worship, through the spiritual lens of a relationship with God in Christ, it can become rather personal.

Under the weight of sin's shame and from the depths of guilt and remorse, the only place to turn is Jesus. Now Satan, of course, will try to convince us otherwise—preferring we remain separated from God, in the dark, and under its imposing burden.

Verses 8 through 10 are God's gracious response. He speaks intimately and personally, as a Father. And He extends these four assurances to be remembered:

1. God instructs us
2. God counsels us
3. God intimately guides us
4. God enfolds us

What a loving and gentle response! God gave the reassurances of being present, watchful, and providing wise counsel. But He also added a necessary warning.

Passages like this help us remember that God graciously accepts the honest confessions of His children. And that He has willingly made it possible for relationship to be restored and maintained through His Son, Jesus Christ.

A celebration of His unconditional love is also expressed as part of this psalm (vs 11). Worship and obedience are appropriate responses to a Father who has responded to humanity in such a way.

The opening verses (vs 1, 2), as well as the conclusion (vs 11), espouse the blessedness of the forgiven. A blessedness to be remembered—and lived out in gratitude.

Loving Father of all mercy, the joy in Your forgiveness is indescribable! Thank You for accepting our humble and sincere confessions and for the restoration it brings. Teach us prudence and understanding, that we might not behave as a stubborn beast. Thank You for the blessedness that comes from the costly forgiveness bought by the blood of Your precious Son, Jesus Christ.



A Psalm for Remembrance

During an early morning Bible read, a particular morsel captured my attention. But it doesn't lie within a verse to be referred to. It's simply an outlying phrase.

Turn to Psalm 70. Notice the small portion of the descriptive subtitle which reads, *to bring to remembrance* (ASV).

Isn't that precisely what is needed in desperate times? To bring to remembrance God's past deliverance, grace, and provision?

A recollection of the Lord's past deeds always rejuvenates hope!

Now look further into the actual psalm itself, to the two verses below:

*Please God, rescue me! Come quickly, Lord, and help me.
But I am poor and needy; please hurry to my aid, O God,
You are my helper and my savior; O LORD, do not delay!
(vs 1, 5)*

Do you get a sense of the urgency in David's petition?

Verse 1 in the King James version uses *make haste*. The New American Standard says *hasten to deliver me*. This speaks to David's dire need.

He rightly turned to the only One who can help in dire circumstances.

Where do you turn?

David also took time to notice who God is. And when we do, praise follows.

Praise settles and puts things into perspective. Praise flips anxiety to gladness, as he acknowledged in verse 4:

*But may all who search for You be filled
with joy and gladness.
May those who love Your salvation repeatedly shout,
"God is great!"*

It's a prayer for all seekers.

David provided a truth in these words: No matter the circumstance we find ourselves in, when we shift our focus, God renews our countenance and graciously fills us with His peace.

When you find yourself in a frightful situation and recall the Lord's acts of faithful kindness, faith is renewed to believe He is able, willing, and altogether trustworthy.

God is GREAT! Oh, to remember, most gentle Lord, how You have rescued Your people. You are my Helper . . . my Savior—let me not forget.



When Enough is Enough

*There are three things that are never satisfied,
four that never say, "Enough!":
the grave,
the barren womb,
land, which is never satisfied with water,
and fire,
which never says, "Enough!"
(Prv 30:15-16)*

The captioned footnote in my *Life Application Bible* reads, "*Three things....four*" is a poetic way of saying the list is not complete. That being the case, could we then also add to this catalog a worldly heart as something that never says "Enough"?

The heart (certainly mine anyway) tends to have an insatiable appetite. (Especially when it longs for anything other than God.) Needing to remain filled, it endlessly desires.

Desiring worldly things incubates into an unquenchable plague. Some examples of what I classify as "worldly" (temporal things the world values) can include: a standard of living, material possessions, finances, items of leisure/comfort, etc. They can leave us wanting. Because only God can fill that void. He keeps the desires of our heart satisfied (Ps 37:4).

Truly delighting in the Lord changes your desires. It flips them. It flips the desire for the created into a desire for the Creator.

Drifting from contentment to longing is a quiet, gradual fade. It can most easily assault when you've undergone a period of financial crisis (that theory is based upon personal experience). When you find yourself continually praying for provision and the wait is long, discouragement can hijack contentment. When you long for relief . . . solutions, the source of joy can be dethroned—from Creator to created.

That's precisely when a misguided heart can boldly proclaim, "**Enough!**" That's when we can remember to exchange the secular for the sacred and sacrifice our temporal wants on the altar of gratitude. That's when we can choose to desire God more . . . and have enough.

*Merciful God, You are my heart's desire and my true delight! Grant me discernment, to recognize that any other longing is an imposter. Anchor these desires to the eternal. And help me to keep my heart—my **whole** heart—stayed on You.*

Day Twenty-Three



A Covenant Remembered from Eternity

For thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath in breaking the covenant, yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish for you an everlasting covenant (Ezk 16:59-60 ESV).

In this past year-of-all-years, have you felt horribly alone? Have you felt twisted and turned inside-out and upside-down? Have you wondered where God is in all this? And if He even cares?

You may have felt like your prayers are unheard. Your troubles insignificant. And the love of God drained right out of the world.

There is much God has given us in the way of reassurance for times like these. One is this: covenant.

Cover-to-cover, the Bible reveals God keeping His covenant through Christ. It is the backbone to every storyline.

Covenant is something God cannot forget. Hear these words and linger over them:

*Can a mother forget the baby at her breast
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?
Though she may forget,
I will not forget you!
See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands;
your walls are ever before me
(Is 49:15-16).*

The prophets proclaimed the Word of the Lord: *I remember My covenant.*

How could He possibly forget? Ever before Him, Jesus bears the marks of covenant on His scarred body.

If the New Covenant is a better covenant (Heb 7:22), and if God never forgot the Old Covenant, how much more will He remember the New?

But it must be cherished . . . revered (see Heb 10:28-21).

We share in that covenant. In partaking of the new covenant meal, the Lord's Supper, we remember the Lord and honor His sacrifice. We draw near to Him . . . and one another. We dine in fellowship with the King of Covenant—as Mephibosheth did David (2 Sm 9:13).

Dare I share, however, my concern that we moderns don't have the same solemn commitment and comprehension to covenant as the ancients? Therefore, we lack a real understanding of its gravity. As Kay Arthur wrote, "No matter what it costs, a covenant is a covenant is a covenant. Covenant commitment is meant to be unbreakable."

Moderns tend to equate it to a conditional promise to be overlooked, disregarded, forgotten . . . broken.

But God is infinitely not like us. We cannot assign to Him our finite, fallible, and mutable propensities.

The prophets continually reminded God's people of God's remembrance of covenant. And the Bible has provided models of this loyal love in narratives like David and Jonathan (1 Sm 18:3), Ruth and Naomi (Ru 1:16), Hosea and Gomer (Hos 2:19-20, 3:1). Jesus and His Bride, the Church (Eph 5:29).

The Israelites did not keep covenant with God—to their own destruction (Jer 22:5, 7-9; 34:8-17). But that was not the case with God. He continually called out for their return (Zec 1:3).

For those times when you do feel He doesn't see you, remember God has promised to never leave or forsake (Dt 31:6, Heb 13:5). Because of covenant. **Nothing** can ever nullify His covenant.

The Lord will always remember His covenant—and remain ever faithful to it.

Sovereign Lord, You provided redemption for Your people; You have ordained Your covenant forever—holy and awesome is Your name (Ps 111:9). Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, equip us with everything good for doing his will, and may He work in us what is pleasing to Him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen (Heb 13:20-21).



Reasoning and Remembering Isaiah's Words

Please tell me you're like this too, in that you have a list of people in the Bible you hope to chat with in our forever home with the Lord!

Isaiah is one near the top of my list. I so want to hear his story, but I also want to thank him for being a faithful servant of the Lord in sharing His words.

Read these verses slowly . . . and very carefully. Then we'll chat on the other side . . .

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord:
*though your sins are like scarlet,
they shall be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they shall become like wool (Is 1:18 ESV).*

I, I am he
*who blots out your transgressions for my own sake,
and I will **not remember** your sins (Is 43:25 ESV).*

I have blotted out your transgressions like a cloud
and your sins like mist;
*return to me, for **I have** redeemed you (Is 44:22 ESV).*

Come – it's both an imperative and an invitation. This is where our response begins—coming to the Lord Jesus. Pretty minimum requirement, don't you think? And rather doable. But it **is** on us to take that first step.

Now – the sooner, the better. And do not delay.

Says the Lord – YHWH. The voice-of-all-wisdom, with ultimate authority, to heed. And accept His calling to cognize His truth.

Let us reason – another invitation. Reasoning seems to have “left the building.” But we are called to it. Reasoning is also reciprocal. It's not one-sided. We can reason with God, by consulting His Word, bringing our requests and questions to Him in prayer. We can wait before Him and listen. And we can seek the godly counsel of His servants.

Though = grace! And for added emphasis Isaiah has employed parallelism, two poetic ways of saying the same thing. Though our sins are grievous and many. Though we

have His blood on our hands. Though we lowly creatures should be condemned guilty. Though . . . *(need I go on?)*

I Am He – Jesus. Blotting that extensive is only Jesus-possible. He emphatically states that only I Am is the remedy of the fallen human condition.

Remember not – yesterday's post featured how the Lord remembers. But today, it's what He has chosen to forget. Our iniquities, sins, and transgressions are not only forgiven, they are *forgotten*. More grace!

I have – done! Past tense. Believe it!

WOW!

Merciful God, may we be faithful servants of Your Word like Isaiah. And pour out such gratitude, that what You spoke through him is now a reality for those in Christ Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, who blots out our sins like mist.



Remembering the Suffering Servant

What comes to mind when you think of a king?

Most people have a preconceived opinion about royalty. A quick round of word association might yield descriptors like *rich*, *pampered*, *luxury*, or *spoiled*. Therefore, commoners typically find it frustrating when royals whine about being mistreated.

There has only been one who truly was unjustly mistreated, and brutally so—yet not a word of complaint rolled past His holy lips.

Today, let's solemnly remember the suffering of Creation's King, Jesus, from the sacred text of Isaiah 53.

*For he grew up before him like a young plant,
and like a root out of dry ground;
he had no form or majesty that we should look at him,
and no beauty that we should desire him.
He was despised and rejected by men,
a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.
Surely he has borne our griefs
and carried our sorrows;
yet we esteemed him stricken,
smitten by God, and afflicted.
But he was pierced for our transgressions;
he was crushed for our iniquities;
upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
and with his wounds we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.
He was oppressed, and he was afflicted,
yet he opened not his mouth;
like a lamb that is led to the slaughter,
and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent,
so he opened not his mouth.
By oppression and judgment he was taken away;
and as for his generation, who considered
that he was cut off out of the land of the living,*

*stricken for the transgression of my people?
And they made his grave with the wicked
and with a rich man in his death,
although he had done no violence,
and there was no deceit in his mouth.
Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief;
when his soul makes an offering for guilt,
he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days;
the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand.
Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous,
and he shall bear their iniquities.
Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many,
and he shall divide the spoil with the strong,
because he poured out his soul to death
and was numbered with the transgressors;
yet he bore the sin of many,
and makes intercession for the transgressors
(Is 53:2-12 ESV).*

It was always foretold that God's Messiah would be a suffering servant. It sounds preposterous. It sounds counter-intuitive. Extreme. It sounds like love. And Divine brilliance.

The One wielding all power humbled Himself and revealed a heart both meek and gentle (Mt 11:29).

The One with all riches became poor.

The All-Glorious One unrobed His majesty, having no human beauty of His own.

The One with the joys of heaven became a *man of sorrows*.

The sinless **Son of God** was *acquainted with grief*. Talk about injustice! At times He was *overwhelmed with sorrow* (Mt 26:37-38).

The righteous One was *pierced* for the unrighteous. Stricken. Afflicted. Crushed. Did He not have to be broken to such an extent, considering the extent of brokenness in the world?

Life itself, *poured out his soul to death*. The Prince of Peace, who reigns at the right hand of God, was willingly *numbered with the transgressors*. He bore the sin of many, yet He does not hold the sins of those He has redeemed against them. Rather, He continues to make *intercession for the transgressors*.

King, Savior, God . . . suffered.

And He served. The King to serve became the servant—to death.

What God would do such a thing?!

The Creator of the cosmos.

Jesus.

Our Lord and God, we remember Your immense suffering. We remember Your loving and sacrificial servanthood. We bow our hearts in sorrow. And gratitude, that by Your willing poverty others become unfathomably rich.



Remembering the Love of God

*See what great love the Father has lavished on us,
that we should be called children of God!
(1 Jn 3:1a)*

In the everyday rush-of-life, it's easy to forget the love of the Father. Both that it exists and its immensity—forgotten.

But the apostle John reminds us with this exclamatory statement. Because it's a reminder we need in this often-harsh life.

That we are even called His child is lavish in itself. *And that is what we are! (1 Jn 3:1b)*

What clouds your vision to it, like a foggy mirror after a steamy shower? We often view ourselves as anything but a child of God.

What of others? Don't we often forget to see them from heaven's viewpoint?

But we have this hope, *that He who began a good work in us will complete it (Php 1:6)*. A work which includes our consistent ability to possess His love and express it to others.

It's a constant prayer and unwavering hope—that I might know Him and be made like Him. All the while remembering that I am lavished in His love.

Loving Father, I praise You for this love beyond all comprehension—showered upon us lavishly from Your grace. Build in me an awareness that I am Your child. And to see others in the same light. I confess that I do not always treat them as such. Forgive me. And transform this heart of mine to love as You love.

Day Twenty-Seven



Remembering What To Do With Self

*I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me
(Gal 2:20).*

I reminded us yesterday of the lavish love of the Father that Jesus revealed to mankind. He also taught us of sacrifice.

In remembrance of the sacrifice of His perfect, sinless life to atone for sin, let's consider how we are called to sacrifice.

Aren't we called to lay down our lives? Hide our lives in Him? That can only come by way of sacrificing self. It comes by slaying the constant awareness of self, in exchange for becoming more self-sacrificial.

God has tuned my ears to listen to my own prayers. He has pricked my heart to recognize the continual requests for self-preservation. Prayers for self-absorbed blessing and comfort.

I forget my crucified self.

I forget that I have been crucified with Christ. That I no longer live, but it is He who lives in me. Anything less is, well, *less!*

I forget that I live only because He gave His life for me.

Galatians 2:20 holds out the sacrifice of two selves, His and mine. I, however, forget *mine*.

I don't want to forget His sacrifice . . . or mine. Because remembering sacrifice deletes the self from centered.

Holy God, hallowed be Thy marvelous name. Forgive me for my self-centered life. Instill in me an attitude of self-sacrifice. Rather, empower me to live a Christ-centered life. May it begin today, for now is the season to renew heart, mind, and soul—consecrated solely unto You.

Day Twenty-Eight



Praise for the Kingdom's King

*Thine is the kingdom,
and the power,
and the glory, forever.
Amen.*

*Didache**
Teaching of the Twelve Apostles

Countless Christians have memorized this as part of the *Disciples Prayer*. I did so when I was quite young. And I've recited it innumerable times ever since.

Different aspects of that doxology have touched me in a variety of ways over the years, but recently I've seen it with a renewed perspective. In considering Who the *Thine* more fully is, a deeper praise has been stirred within me.

Praise Him with me:

Thine is the Christ,
Who formed the heavens and all that is in them;
Who stood guard in the fiery furnace,
Saved mankind with outstretched arms,
And defeated death.

Thine is our trustworthy Savior,
Of goodness, mercy, and compassion;
Our Righteous God,
Full of grace and truth.

A God Who came near,
To save wretched sinners;
Never to abandon or forsake;
Whose perfect love never fails.

Thine is the Holy I AM;
All power is His,
All glory is His;
Our Everlasting King of kings.

He is the God of the Kingdom,
Eternally to reign;
And the kingdom is **His**,

All His, and no other.

Amen, indeed!

That's good news of the kingdom!

Lord of all lords, all praise be Yours and Yours alone. For Yours is the kingdom! Not ours. Nor anyone else's. YOURS! May more be gathered into Your kingdom before the King returns in glory and power.

** What is sometimes referred to as the Didache is not in all early manuscripts or modern translations as part of what is known as the Lord's Prayer (recorded in Matthew 6:13).*

Day Twenty-Nine



Remembering the Call

The voice sailed through the thick sea air,
Its sound waves rippled across the watery surface,
Waking fishermen's ears;
It was a call of a lifetime.
A call that carries through time and space,
Reverberating still.
A call for them.
A call for us.
A call to those who've not yet come.
It's the call of Christ.
The call to follow.

Let's look closely at the Lord's call, remember His call to discipleship.

Saying yes to His call is to say yes to:

Follow

As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed him (Mt 4:18-20).

It's not enough to hear the call. It is to respond in faith. It calls for unconditional surrender. And then to let Him lead. Allow Him to use your gifts for His purpose. A purpose to grow the family of God in Christ.

Changed Lives

Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men.' So they pulled their boats up on shore, left everything and followed him (Lk 5:10b-11).

The lives of the twelve disciples were never the same. So it is with all His faithful followers. Buried in baptismal waters, He raises the believer to a new life, hidden in Him. Are you willing to leave everything of your old life behind?

Messenger Duty

He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation' (Mk 16:15).

We have been called to share the good news of the gospel. We are called to tell. Tell others He is the Way, the Truth, the Life. Tell others that He lives and will return. Tell others that there is more to life than this life.

Love in Community

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another (Jn 13:34-35).

Answering the call is to respond in obedience to the Lord's commands. A command to love. It is to love in such a way, fueled by the Spirit, that others see Him.

Jesus calls us to follow Him, to live differently, to be His messenger, and, above all, to love.

Remember, God's grace is sufficient to answer His every call.

Lord Jesus, You are ever calling from distant shores. Help me to listen. To move these feet to follow. And to live and love as I should.



The Crown of the Beatitudes

Multitudes gathered from all over the Levant region. Jesus surveyed the crowds gathering, then ascended the mountainside to address them. The King of the mountain took His rightful place and proceeded to deliver His inaugural address—espousing the attitudes and blessedness of the citizens of His kingdom.

Through His teachings and parables, Jesus painted a portrait of the attitudes His disciples were to portray. The *Sermon on the Mount* (recorded in Matthew 5-7) is one such teaching. It contains the beatitudes, the character and attitudes of the citizens of the kingdom of God.

The King of the kingdom set before His disciples a crown of splendor to wear when He presented the beatitudes. They have been called *declarations of blessedness* (NIV Study Bible) because blessed are those who possess them.

The beatitudes are what the crowned of the kingdom wear.

*The crown of the kingdom of God
the citizens are to wear
is the beatitudes.*

The beatitudes are our crowning glory—because they reflect King Jesus. And because God bestows upon those who exhibit these values a certain blessedness. But they do not come naturally to us. Only as one abides in the Spirit are they able to discern the ways of God. In fact, practicing these attitudes is impossible to do separate and apart from the Spirit of God. But they can become a habit—by training our behavior to behave, until it becomes a part of us. Like something we wear. But we must first remember them. Then choose to put them on daily, sometimes moment-by-moment.

It all begins with being poor in spirit. We must first empty ourselves of ourselves, acknowledge that only God is God, and admit that we are entirely and completely destitute beings, dependent upon Him for our every breath.

Jesus was born crowned—crowned Son of Man and Son of God. Yet He wore a crown fashioned by man—a crown of cruel thorns. But God crowned Him in honor and glory. And He now wears the crown of victory as King of kings.

Which crown will you wear: the crown of the kingdom of this world or the kingdom of the Christ of God?

We are crowned in divine glory when we wear the attitudes of Christ Jesus. When we put on His humility, righteousness, mercy, and gentleness. When we display the beatitudes of the King, we wear the splendor of His grace. And we are crowned *His*.

Heavenly Father, we praise the King of Glory for His boundless mercy and love. Make us better students of the teachings of Jesus, as we commit to honor and reflect Him by wearing these blessed beatitudes.

Selections from my Bible Study, *Crowned*



Remembering the Kingdom

To remember Jesus is to also remember His kingdom. And we definitely want to keep the kingdom on our radar. After all, it is the realm of our citizenship.

Jesus often taught in the form of parables. Many of them pertained to the kingdom of heaven. That's where my mind is leading . . . and my pen will follow.

Kingdom parables can be used as a good measure. We'll consider perceived value, love for others, and readiness from a few selected parables in measuring the state of our hearts.

Perceived Value

Two parables on the value of the kingdom are *The Parable of the Hidden Treasure* (Mt 13:44) and *The Parable of the Pearls* (Mt 13:45-46). In these parables, Jesus portrays priorities for the disciple. The kingdom is great treasure worth selling all earthly possessions to gain.

Take stock by asking the following questions. Do I recognize the value of the kingdom? Do I respond as those in Jesus' examples?

Love

Jesus poses a rhetorical question with the *Parable of the Lost Sheep* (Lk 15:3-7) and the *Parable of the Lost Coin* (Lk 15:8-10). They portray people who go above and beyond in diligent search of what has been lost.

We can ask ourselves the following for good measure. Do I share Christ's love for the lost? And His joy upon their salvation? Am I concerned about others entering the kingdom?

Preparedness

Jesus made a point in the *Parable of the Ten Maids* (Mt 25:1-13) that we must be prepared in our expectant waiting for His return. For therein lies wisdom.

Honestly measure the state of your watchful readiness to the wise maids.

These are snapshots from a larger picture Jesus painted for us. His teachings help disciples better see the things of the kingdom required of faith.

Choose a parable (any parable), read it. Meditate upon it. And ask Him what lesson He can teach you today.

Dear God in Heaven, may I remember to live a kingdom lifestyle today by this truth: You have "rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son [You] love, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13-14).

Day Thirty-Two



Death Denying

Her green eyes pooled with tears as she tried to choke out the truthful words, "I'm dying."

A lack of understanding, topped with fear, struck a pounding blow. "No, Mommy!" this then 17-year-old girl protested. There was no rationalizing it. I blurted out an emotional response in sheer ignorance.

A jumble of questions collided in my brain. *Malignant cancer?* What was *that?* What did it all *mean?* I thought someone had to be terribly confused . . . and I refused to admit that it was me!

*He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things
and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law,
and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.
He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him.
But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter.
'Get behind me, Satan!' he said. 'You do not have in mind the things of God,
but the things of men'
(Mk 8:31-33).*

Three times Jesus told His disciples of His impending death. And three times He was met with a different response.

- The 1st response was denial (Mt 16:21-28)
- The 2nd time conjured grief (Mt 17:22-23)
- The 3rd rallied a mother's request (Mt 20:17-28)

I can marginally empathize with the impulsive response of Peter's when Jesus predicted His death the first time. Isn't death for denying? That's what our errant fallacy of immortality screams, anyway.

Remember, there's no denying His death.

Jesus informed His disciples they were not to be ashamed of the words He spoke—even when they were hard to hear. Disciples are to have in mind the things of God, no matter how tempting it is to do otherwise.

Jesus knew He was going to suffer and die. **And yet**, He loved. **And yet**, He served. **And yet**, He faithfully administered God's grace, never denying His imminent death.

Death is not to be denied. Will not be denied. It is to be faced head-on—in full view of resurrection in Christ, the One who overcame the grave.

God of grace, Your Son truly amazes us. Because of Him, we have a hope that gives us peace in the face of death. May we take His words to heart, not denying Your truth. Allow them to breathe life into us. And courage to speak the gospel of our Lord's death and resurrection.

Day Thirty-Three



Remembering Mary

Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume and poured it on Jesus' feet, then wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

"Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" (Jn 12:1-8).

In a matter of days, Passion Week will be upon us. So, let's travel to Bethany, the closest thing to a home-away-from-home for Jesus.

Six days prior to Jesus' final meal, He shared a meal with friends. Peer into this intimate setting and take special note of Mary's lavish worship.

Be reminded that devotion can be costly.

Close your eyes. Breathe deeply. Imagine the intoxicating aroma. The house was filled with the sweet fragrance of her worship.

Mary poured out her most valuable possession onto her Master—for He poured out His love upon her.

Remember to be extravagant in your worship of the Holy One of Israel.

Father, I pour out my worship to soothe those nail-scarred feet of my Lord and Master. May the aroma of love fill heaven's throne room for you to delight in.

Day Thirty-Four



Remembering the Prayer of Jesus

*After Jesus said this,
he looked toward heaven and prayed
(Jn 17:1)*

Jesus had just finished sharing the Passover Feast with His friends and disciples. In a matter of hours, He would be arrested. So He headed to the garden to pray.

Facing His greatest trial, Jesus looked toward heaven.

How much more should we?

Jesus prayed that He would bring glory to God. He prayed the same for His disciples . . . for us. This is a prayer we should continually pray for one another, as well.

*They are not of the world,
even as I am not of it
(Jn 17:16).*

Remember, fellow alien, we are not of this world. Our home is with the Lord. We belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, as declared by its King.

*I have given them the glory that you gave me,
that they may be one as we are one:
I in them and you in me.
May they be brought to complete unity
to let the world know
that you sent me
and have loved them
even as you have loved me
(Jn 17:22-23).*

Jesus bestows upon His followers the highest honor and blessing—He is in us. He does so for the greatest of purposes—unity.

Jesus prayed that we would know the depth of the Father's love. Its depth is unfathomable, but its sweetness can be tasted in diving its depths.

I have often given thanks to God for continuing to answer the prayers given years ago by my Yia-Yia, my grandmother. I must remember to thank Him for answering the prayers of my Savior, Jesus Christ.

Remember the prayer Jesus prayed. And don't forget to remember, God has already answered them.

Lord Jesus, thank You for bringing glory to God, the Father. Please accept my thanks for the prayers You agonized on our behalf. Thank You for teaching us how to pray. Continue to make God known to us. Through You in us, may we strive for unity and reflect Your glory.

Day Thirty-Five



Royal Welcome

*Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.*

*I will take away the chariots from Ephraim
and the war-horses from Jerusalem,
and the battle bow will be broken.
He will proclaim peace to the nations.
His rule will extend from sea to sea
and from the River to the ends of the earth
(Zec 9:9-10).*

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a gentle donkey, as the prophesied Messiah. He came in peace, bringing salvation.

He knew He came to a fickle crowd. A crowd that would turn on Him in a matter of days. But, on that day, He was welcomed. On that day, He was celebrated in a grand victory parade.

The Hope of the Ages had finally arrived. And Jesus was finally receiving the honor He was due (albeit short-lived).

*When he came near the place where the road goes down the Mount of Olives,
the whole crowd of disciples began joyfully to praise God in loud voices
for all the miracles they had seen:
"Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord!"
"Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!"
(Lk 29:37-38)*

Lift up your *Hosannas* in celebration and declare Jesus King. Be reminded that His is a kingdom that spans the earth.

*All glory, laud, and honor
To Thee, Redeemer, King,
To whom the lips of children*

*Made sweet hosannas ring;
Thou art the King of Israel,
Thou David's royal Son,
Who in the Lord's name comest,
The King and blessed one!
~Theodulph of Orleans*

Come, Lord, enter our hearts as we raise our palms of worship. We praise You with Hosannas, for You came to save. We crown You King. May all glory be Yours forevermore.



He Left NOTHING Undone

*I have brought you glory on earth
by completing the work you gave me to do
(Jn 17:4).*

Jesus looked to His Father for the strength He needed to finish the most difficult task at hand. His earthly life of obedience and accomplishment was coming to a close. And so, He turned toward God and uttered one of the most remarkable prayers of humility, honesty, and intercession.

Jesus finished what God gave Him to do. And He brought glory to God in the doing.

He completed His mission. *Nothing more.* He didn't add anything of His own agenda or toss in a few extra ideas offered by others. He also accomplished *nothing less*. **Nothing.** No task was left unchecked on His To-Do list. Everything was completed. Nothing left undone.

I'm a list person, so I can really appreciate what it means to have every item crossed off your list. Because there always seems to be a perpetual list, doesn't there? You know, the things you never seem to get to. You either run out of time or energy, so you add them to that "running list."

Jesus taught by example how to glorify God: by completing the work God gives to do. It's the same for all of us—but it's played out differently in each life. But He demonstrated that we can glorify God with every activity under the sun, at any status level or occupation—no matter the task.

Jesus reached the end of His earthly life and was able to say matter-of-factly (not boastfully, but in genuine humility) that He completed what God gave Him to do. That is the ultimate measure of success.

He brought glory to God . . . right here on earth.

Heavenly Father, now and forevermore, glorify Christ with the glory He had before the world began (Jn 17:5). May I never doubt that He left anything undone that is needed for eternal life. All was accomplished by His sacrificial act of living, dying, and being raised to new life. All was finished by Him in the most glorious of ways.

Day Thirty-Seven



When Darkness Fell Upon the Garden

As our reflections upon the last days of the Lord's passion week progress, we move from the intimate scene of yesterday's post, where Jesus was pouring out His anguish to His Father, to the mob scene of today. Imagine with me as we remember the Garden . . . when darkness descended.

Confusion erupts in the dark, among the ancient olive trees of Gethsemane.

Awoken to confrontation, the groggy disciples face highly charged mob. An armed battalion carrying torches invades their peaceful rest. Judas breaks through the crowd to greet Jesus with a kiss.

Chaos breaks out. Peter draws a sword. Not only does he meet flesh, he meets a rebuke from Jesus.

It's unclear what all happened next, for it came crashing quick as lightening. *Could it really be **Jesus** they arrested?!*

No one stuck around to find out, as the group dashed into the cover of night—unfaithful under fire, fear their only master.

*"But this has all taken place that the writings
of the prophets might be fulfilled."
Then all the disciples deserted him and fled
(Mt 26:56).*

As for Jesus, He received Judas' kiss. He watched His friends run. (*Of course, He knew they would.*) He did not slay the mob. In fact, His final act of freedom was to heal the wounded enemy.

This had all been foretold. And now the time had come. Trinity's battle, begun in the first Garden, reached its climax in yet another garden.

The olive grove was enveloped in the dark of this night, as the plans of man converged with the will of God. The world crashed in and shattered the tranquil scene. But the Prince of Peace was not unfamiliar with this propensity while doing the Father's will. *If He was not exempt, should we expect any less?*

An unjust arrest is always hard to stomach. But especially this one. Nevertheless, we must remember what the Righteous One endured—because what He suffered He

suffered for a world of sinners who should have been the ones hauled off, arrested, tried, and rightly found guilty.

Lord Jesus, make me strong to remain faithful under fire. To stand, when fear challenges faith.



In Silence He Stood

*Meanwhile Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor asked him,
"Are you the king of the Jews?"*

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied.

*When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, **he gave no answer**. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you?" **But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge—to the great amazement of the governor** (Mt 27:11-14 *emph mine*).*

Jesus answered Pilate's question, but He did not answer the charges against Him. He did not say a word in His own defense. He remained steadfast in His silence.

He was silent then. He is silent still.

People continue to make their accusations of Jesus. We question, slander, defame, doubt . . . accuse.

If there is anyone who could have made a convincing argument to win freedom from an unjust verdict, it was Jesus Christ. He made no attempt to present a case. Neither did He try to negotiate sentencing or make any bargains. He would settle for nothing less than glorifying God.

You'd think this silence worked against Him. But did it? Or does it prove Him to be even greater still?

Jesus' integrity has always been such. People have to make up their own minds. He will not force a decision upon anyone.

Three things may have added to His resolve:

- Total submissiveness in trust of His Father's will
- Determination to complete His mission
- Conviction that more was going on than was visibly perceived

As a vocal self-defender, I share in Pilate's great amazement. He knew there was no wrong deserving of this death penalty in the Man before Him.

But Jesus cared more about saving others than saving Himself. So He placed Himself in God's gracious hands to do the saving.

And the verdict? There was the human verdict, which sentenced Jesus to death by crucifixion. There was God's verdict three days later, however, which overruled the first. That vindication rocked the heavens, earth, and all of eternity by declaring His Son perfectly righteous.

Might every confession at every baptism also be a pronounced verdict?

What is your verdict?

God Almighty, not only did Your Son remain silent that fateful day, You did as well. How amazing! The silence of the Lamb of God speaks volumes about how You can be trusted. Jesus did not give Himself over to Pilate that day, He gave Himself over to You. Teach me that same unwavering obedience.

Day Thirty-Nine



Passed Off

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd.

"I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

(Mt 27:24)

Pilate made quite the dramatic statement in this confrontational Passion scene. The mob was riled up, tempers flared . . . and Pilate backed off. He wasn't about to muddy himself with involvement. He wanted no part in this controversial mess. Call it the great pass off. *This Jesus was somebody else's problem.*

Is it possible the adage, *I wash my hands of the situation*, was birthed in this moment?

But isn't passing the buck a common trait? (Or is it better classified as a temptation?)

Several factors brought Pilate to display this disdain. He found no culpability in Jesus. He sensed the basis for the charges against Jesus was grounded purely in envy (Mt 27:18). Added to the mayhem, he had the warning from his wife not to charge this innocent man (Mt 27:19). He gambled that the crowds would choose to have Jesus released. So, Pilate passed off. *Let someone else take responsibility for the outcome—I'm innocent.*

There were times when I didn't want to take responsibility where Jesus was concerned. I wasn't about to take the blame for wielding the hammer . . . driving those nails. It was more comfortable to deny my part in putting Him up on that cross. *I guess there's a little bit of Pilate in all of us.*

Pilate attempted to relieve himself of any wrongdoing by his words, but his actions spoke louder, *for he handed him over to be crucified.*

This Easter don't wash your hands of Jesus. When conflict battles within and you're confronted with a choice regarding the Christ of God, don't pass Him off. Set Him free with truth. Remember to choose Him every time.

Forgive me, Father, for the times I've washed my hands of Jesus, my Lord.

Day Forty



A Day to Remember

*You know how I am scorned, disgraced and shamed;
all my enemies are before you.*

*Scorn has broken my heart
and has left me helpless;
I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
for comforters, but I found none.*

*They put gall in my food
and gave me vinegar for my thirst
(Ps 69:19-21).*

Jesus, *counted among transgressors* (Is 53:12), hung between two thieves at life's end. At birth, He was surrounded by lowly shepherds. In life, He hung out with sinners. He was born, lived, and died among the common. Truly God **with** us.

Consider the grand paradox of it all. The lofty, those He also came to save, remained detached . . . removed . . . at a distance. In the Temple, on the royal throne of the king's palace, and on the judgment seat—places were traded, skewed. Roles reversed, perverted. Sinners in seats of honor, the Honorable among the sinners. And Jesus was counted as one of them.

He hung on the place God created to resemble death itself, for it was called *The Place of the Skull, Golgotha*.

He died a Man convicted, legally guilty—for He took upon Himself the guilty judgment for all our despicable sins. The innocent, pure in heart, holy, was appallingly counted among the transgressors.

It stabs the heart . . . stings the eyes.

He took my sin, my shame.
He carried my sorrow, my guilt.
He absorbed my penalty, my blows.
He paid my price, my debt.
He died my death.

Remember with me the crucified Christ:

A sign of mockery haloed His gruesome altar.

A garland of thorns embedded upon His holy head.

A tear-streaked face in anguish.

A stream of cleansing, clotting blood.

Bare flesh, torn and bruised.

A blood-soaked tree.

Pools of saving blood muddied hallowed ground, stomped carelessly underfoot.

The cries, the cruelty, the repulsive injustice.

The lavish price of my forgiveness.

Buried.

From cave to cave, manger to tomb,

Everlasting to Everlasting—

Lamb of God slain.

Holy God, I pray the prayer of Jesus this day. For the masses that look to the Cross of Christ and see nothing more than a Jewish criminal, forgive them, for they know not (Lk 23:34). Through my lament, as I remember Your perfect sacrifice this hallowed day, accept my deepest and eternal thanks.



They Remembered

*On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they entered, they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two men in clothes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, "Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen! **Remember** how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.'" **Then they remembered his words** (Lk 24:1-8 *emph mine*).*

It was the very first day of the week. Very early in the morning. And these women were expecting one thing . . . only to find quite another.

While they were wondering about it all, they were prompted by God's heavenly messengers to remember.

The angels carried an ageless message for us all, *Remember how He told us...*

We must remember the teachings of Jesus. Especially in the face of the bewildering.

What if they had gone away dejected? What if, in their profound grief, they left—lost in their misunderstanding of the Christ?

What if they chose not to remember His words of truth and promise?

What if we?

Instead, they remembered.

They ran to share the good news with others and experienced the triumph of the risen Lord—because they chose to believe. And their faith soon became sight when they saw the Resurrected Christ.

*Faith in Christ is the **instead** that changes everything.*

Remembering Jesus helps us to better deal with the things that perplex us. It allows our grief to give birth to joy. It turns our mourning to rejoicing. It fuels the hope that death leads to life. Just like it did for those women.

Remember, our Savior no longer hangs on a cross. Our God is not dead, buried in an Israeli tomb. He is risen! He lives!

That's something to remember . . . *always*.

Gracious and Merciful Father, we rejoice that Jesus is glorified! He is risen . . . alive! Praise be to our great God! His life is now available to all. Hallelujah and Amen!

Day Forty-Two



Cling to Jesus

Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). Jesus said to her, "Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God'" (Jn 20:1-17 ESV).

While there is much to wonder about in this passage, Mary's response is not one of them, which is precisely what I love about John's account.

Once Mary realized who Jesus was, in the confusion of the early Resurrection Morning, she responded exactly as I imagine someone would.

Everything changed in that moment. Life catapulted from worst-case-scenario to only-God-possible.

Yes, Mary witnessed an unimaginable miracle; but she also possessed unrestrained devotion!

Mary, the one who loved much, **clings** to Jesus. Overwhelming love, worship, and amazement lunged her forward. She wasn't about to let go of her Lord, her Rabboni! A few days separation was more than she could bear.

Are you living in relationship with Jesus to the extent that your life would be unbearable without Him? Do you cling tightly to the One Who Forgives Much, the One Who Saves?

Jesus told Mary not to cling to Him because He had not yet returned to the Father. Curious, I know. But He has now! He has since ascended to His Father—our Father. He has returned to our God, that He may now be with us all in Spirit. He had to return, in order to send the promised Holy Spirit, so that His disciples would not be separated from Him.

But we still must cling.

Hold tight to Him . . . to His truth . . . to this eternal hope we have in Him.

My God, Praise be that You have exalted our Lord in glory! May I daily cling to Him in love and worship, never to let Him go.



Remembering His Gracious Appearings

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high" (Lk 24:36-49).

And so, there was a new beginning Resurrection Day. Making this, by far, the best beginning ever.

Even after Jesus was humiliated . . . mocked . . . **crucified**, He served, ministered . . . **loved**.

After Jesus rose from the dead, He graciously stayed to complete the training of His disciples. He transformed the audience from undone-disciples to witnesses, with the Risen Lord as their Teacher.

Jesus brought a blessing of peace to a room filled with people cowering in fear (see also Jn 20:19). To people locked behind closed doors, grief-stricken, with no direction and no hope, Christ Jesus appeared. He gently and patiently explained the fulfillment of the Scriptures.

He revealed grace.

They thought they had reached the end of their Jesus-story. But they became recipients of the unimaginable—His appearing. While overjoyed, I imagine they remained a bit dazed. And humbled to participate in a continuing story. But thrilled for a new beginning with eternal hope.

Jesus remained for 40 days. The gospels record twelve accounts of His appearances to over 500 people. Jesus, who led them to Calvary, to death, would now lead them to Pentecost, to a life of power. To their own rebirth.

It's hard to grasp: a dead man walking. Many stumble on this one truth. It is precisely for them that we have been empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is them we endeavor to show the love of Christ-in-the-flesh. That by His wounds they may be healed. The wounds He showed as proof of His identity. The wounds He carries in His body still.

Gracious God, Jesus brings peace into our lives and countless blessings for our faith. He appeared, filled with grace and truth, to continue to lead and teach His disciples so that those who have not seen might believe. And He left, in order to send the All-Powerful Holy Spirit, so that others will do the same. Continue to open our minds, and our eyes, and our mouths. Teach us to be witnesses worthy of Your Name.

Day Forty-Four



Remembering to Continually Pray

Our prayer, Holy Father, is this:
When the advent of Easter is no longer before us,
And these holy days fade away,
May we not forget to remember You daily.

Cure us of our amnesia, Lord:
Chosen-Amnesia, because we choose not to remember;
Enemy-Amnesia, inflicted because the enemy doesn't want us to remember;
Sin-Amnesia, a product of the sin that distracts us from remembering.

Cure us of Thankfulness-Amnesia,
The forgetting to give thanks
For what You've done,
What You're doing,
And what is yet to come.

Vanquish Spirit-Amnesia,
That causes us to neglect to live
Spirit-led lives.

Put an end to all Spiritual-Amnesia,
That forgets the price of our Redemption,
Instigates a loss of hope,
And robs action from faith.

Kindle these minds to a state of high alert,
Watchful readiness;
Continually remembering,
In steadfast prayer.

Wake us from our slumber,
To arise from the dead,
That Christ will shine through us (Eph 5:14).

Day Forty-Five



Remembering His Assuring Words

Forty days counted out past Resurrection Sunday is a day marked for remembrance. Remembrance of the day, ages ago, when the Son of God ascended to heaven. And what better to remember, so that we don't grieve the departure of our Lord, than the promises He made?

I turn today to John 14, to some of His last words spoken during His earthly ministry.

*Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;
believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms.
If it were not so, would I have told you
that I go to prepare a place for you?
(Jn 14:1-2 ESV)*

There's nothing better to remember this whole world over than Jesus' assuring words of the promise of heaven. Scott Franks once preached, "Heaven is not just what happens when you die, it is a truth to be lived right now."

Jesus proclaimed truth we need to live a God-glorifying life now. Truths which include heaven. We must remain steadfast in our citizenship as our new reality for it is more than a place, a destination, it is the state of our hearts.

Matthew Henry summed it up best when he wrote, "It is certain that all that will go to heaven hereafter begin their heaven now and have their hearts there." As we set our hearts and minds above, it changes our frame of reference for all the decisions we make here and now.

Jesus made it a priority for His believers to understand, **to believe**, that He is preparing a place for us. His dying paved the way for our arrival. And His leaving opened the door. That hope hastens our hearts homeward.

*I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.
Yet a little while and the world will see me no more,
but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.*

*Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves me, he will keep my word,
and my Father will love him, and we will come to him
and make our home with him"
(Jn 14:18-19; 23 ESV).*

Though leaving, Jesus did not abandon us. He lives . . . and has offered us that same resurrected and ascended life. Those obedient to His Word have the Father's love and the Spirit residing, ever-present, with us. Jesus' own words reassure us of the fact of eternal life and fellowship with the Trinity. Power for living lies within these words.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (Jn 14:25-27 ESV).

Jesus went, so the Father would send the much-needed Paraclete. This Helper would bring remembrance of Jesus' words to the apostles so they could teach. So they could write it down, preach it in the world, and pass on the message. The Holy Spirit was the Confidence of His disciples then . . . and now. He is the powerful, guiding, growing force of the Church.

And *shalom*. Let us not forget He left *shalom*. A heavenly, divine peace. The unworldly in this disturbed world.

These are life-giving words recorded from Jesus' last night before He gave His life. They are passages worthy of remembering today in our continuation of the Easter drama in which we still live. Three points stand out from them to encourage hope, to strengthen and comfort—so our *hearts won't be troubled*:

Heaven is a reality for the living . . . **now**

God dwells with those who love, trust, and obey Him

Jesus has provided a Helper for our ambassadorship here

Heavenly Father, they looked to the skies, astounded at our Lord's ascension, His return to the Father. They were told not to remain, but "Go!" He came, the Helper, to keep us moving. With Your blessed peace, heaven in our hearts, promises for our faith, and the indwelling Spirit, we have a continual remembrance of You, our Eternal Hope, to carry us home. Give us courage to not just stand looking to the skies for Your return, though imminent. Keep us sharing Your Good News with urgency and expectancy—always believing . . . proclaiming . . . and remembering.



Remembering Pentecost

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them (Acts 2:1-4).

Pentecost*, it is a day of miraculous grace to commemorate and remember.

Born of the Spirit, according to the will of God, and sent by the Word, Jesus Christ, His disciples gathered on Pentecost, were empowered to launch the church into all the world, also born of the Word and the Spirit.

The indwelt apostles and disciples received a new birth by the grace of God and were united, one to another, to accomplish the Lord's commission.

The filling of today's disciples is no less supernatural—though not in quite the same spectacular fashion. But this filling serves to unite all humanity—from every tribe, tongue, and nation. And transforms us into one new humanity—loving and serving one another, glorifying the King, and worshipping the Ancient of Days.

This day was a new beginning, for a new creation. And the early beginnings of the church seemed ideal—until the sin of the world spilled over, staining, dividing, and causing dissension. Though battling to survive in a broken world, the church, by the Spirit, moves forward through history.

Try to imagine the world without her—even as riddled with fault as it is. But dare we? For in a dark and dangerous world, His light and beauty still shines through her. By the Spirit.

How else do **we**, the Body of Christ, His Church, share the gospel in grace and truth?

How else do we live in a manner worthy of our calling?

How else do we live as one new humanity?

How else do we battle sin?

How else would we be sanctified for obedience?

How else do we love, **as He loved?**

Only by the Holy Spirit.

What Gift!

So, in the spirit of such a good and gracious Gift, let us, together—united by one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, as one Body—cooperate with the Spirit to perfect, grow, and mature the church.

Great and Glorious God, we, reborn of the Word and the Spirit, give thanks this memorable day that the Christ has been glorified and the Spirit has been poured out upon us. "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with [us] all" (2 Cor 13:14), to the end of the age—as we faithfully grow and serve the kingdom and our King.

**Pentecost, an annual Jewish festival, was observed 50 days after Passover*

Day Forty-Seven



The day when reality replaces the need for remembering

Occupied by many challenges, what was it young Timothy needed to know most?

The urging of his mentor likely mimicked what Paul himself remembered most often: “Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David” (2 Tm 2:8).

In his chains, Paul remembered the gospel.

In his suffering, he remembered Jesus Christ—raised from the dead.

And that's what he wanted Timothy to remember, too.

It's what we all need to remember.

The grace of God in the remembering gave Paul great endurance. And it gave Timothy wisdom to build a church.

Remembering Jesus Christ, the Messiah of the line of David—and Him raised—gives testimony boldness. It gives the voice that shares the gospel confidence and courage.

It's what our discipleship is made up of—remembering and sharing the gospel.

In doubt? Remember.

In difficulty? Remember.

Suffering? Remember.

Remember He who overcame this world, life, death, and the grave.

Remember, the impossibility of resurrection was made possible. And promised to you.

The resurrection is for the young to remember . . . and the old to never forget.

Paul's remembering carried him through life's most difficult trials—to receive his reward. And the fortitude given the believer for the remembering will get us through this, too.

You can believe this: there will come a day when our future reality will replace the need for remembering. We will have received what the Lord has accomplished that we cling to now on this pilgrimage to that Day.

Good God Almighty, mature our discipleship more with each passing day. Sanctify us by Your Spirit. And in these days of trial, help us to remember the triumph of our Lord and King—making us faithful and fruitful.

#AnEasterForRemembering

A Prayer for 3rd Day Living

Were the era before Christ the 1st day,
this church era the 2nd,
and the time yet to come the 3rd day;

Set our minds,

and the beat of our hearts,

in that 3rd day—

Ever and always eternally focused.

Fit us, Holy One of God, to live in the 3rd day;

The 3rd day of Jesus' sacrifice,

The 3rd day of His new and victorious life.

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the Easter season 2021

