



Holy Week
DEVOTIONAL

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INTRODUCTION

As your pastor, I understand my primary responsibility is to point you to God. Help you understand who He is. Help you hear from Him. Help you talk to Him. Help you grow in a life that is consumed by and enamored with God. In short, my job as your pastor is to call us all to worship God.

There are numerous ways to do this, of course. Every week, I get to open the Scriptures with you and try to explain what the text means and how it impacts your life with God and one another. I have the honor of praying for you: your soul, your health, your relationships, your struggles, your joys. On occasion we have individual conversations where, hopefully, I help you understand your way with God in the world a little better. There are moments in the hospital, at weddings, at funerals. My responsibility at these things is to help us all remember and worship and obey God.

There's also writing. During the pandemic I wrote to you weekly. Weekly letters that usually went out on Saturday morning. I am not sure if my sole intent was to point you to God or if I just needed a connection. I enjoyed working on those letters. I have missed writing to you in that way. I believe writing can be yet another way of calling us to remember and worship God.

This may be the first and only "book" (I use this term very loosely since this is only a nine-day devotional for use during Holy Week) I write to you. This may be the first of several. Who knows? Only God. But for now, I feel compelled to give you a short devotional to help you connect with God during the week between Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday. It's written for you – the Church at West Franklin.

Christians around the world are practicing Lent. Lent is a 40-day journey of sorts where many Christians give something up for the forty or so days leading up to Easter. The word "Lent" comes from an old English word that means "lengthen." It is a lengthy time. If my research is correct, it stems from Jesus's 40-days of wilderness fasting between His baptism and earthly ministry. He was tempted by and resisted the devil. Lent is a season of surrender. Surrender something in order to get something else. Surrender one thing in order to hear from, connect with, worship, and obey God. I like that. I don't like to surrender. But I do like the thought of intimacy with God.

Though this is only a nine-day devotional, I want to challenge you to approach it as an act of surrender. Perhaps you want to "give up" something as an act of wanting to hear from God. Perhaps not. I challenge you to carve out 10-15 minutes a day and sit with these meditations. Listen for the voice of the living God. Surrender having to crowd out that time with more noise. Instead, listen. Think about how all of Holy Week was Jesus's surrender to the Father: from his riding into town on a donkey, to His arrest and crucifixion, and even his resurrection. All of it, surrender.

West Franklin, let us worship God. I offer this to you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Looking to God with You,

Pastor Matt

SUNDAY (MARCH 29, AD 33)

- *Jesus Enters Jerusalem*
MATTHEW 21: 1-11; MARK 11:1-10; LUKE 19:29-44; JOHN 12:12-19
- *Jesus Predicts His Death*
JOHN 12:20-36
- *Jesus Visits the Temple*
MATTHEW 21:14-17; MARK 11:11

MONDAY (MARCH 30, AD 33)

- *Jesus Curses a Fig Tree*
MATTHEW 21:18-19; MARK 11:12-14
- *Jesus Cleanses the Temple*
MATTHEW 21:12-13; MARK 11:15-18; LUKE 19:45-48

TUESDAY (MARCH 31, AD 33)

- *Jesus Teaches His Followers a Lesson about the Fig Tree*
MATTHEW 21: 20-22; MARK 11:20-26
- *Jesus Teaches and Engages in Controversies in the Temple*
MATTHEW 21:23-33; MARK 11:27-12:44; LUKE 20:1-21:4
- *Jesus Predicts the Future*
MATTHEW 24-25; MARK 13:1-37; LUKE 21:5-36

WEDNESDAY (APRIL 1, AD 33)

- *The Plot Against Jesus*
MATTHEW 26:3-5; MARK 14:1-2; LUKE 22:1-2

THURSDAY (APRIL 2, AD 33)

- *Preparations for Passover*
MATTHEW 26:17-19; MARK 14:12-16; LUKE 22:7-13
- *The Final Passover*
MATTHEW 26:20-29; MARK 14:17-23; LUKE 22:14-30; JOHN 13-14
- *The Farewell Discourse*
JOHN 13-17
- *Jesus Predicts Peter's Denials*
MATTHEW 26:31-35; MARK 14:27-31; LUKE 22:31-34
- *Jesus Issues Final Practical Commands*
LUKE 22:35-38
- *Garden of Gethsemane*
MATTHEW 26:36-46; MARK 14:32-42; LUKE 22:40-46

Holy Week

EVENTS & SCRIPTURES

FRIDAY (APRIL 3, AD 33)

- *The Betrayal and Arrest of Jesus*
MATTHEW 26:47-56; MARK 14:43-52; LUKE 22:47-53; JOHN 18:2-12
- *The Jewish Trial of Jesus (Phase 1): Informal*
JOHN 18:13-14; 19-24
- *The Jewish Trial of Jesus (Phase 2): More Formal*
MATTHEW 26:57, 59-68; MARK 14:53, 55-65; LUKE 22:63-71
- *Peter Denies Jesus*
MATTHEW 26:58, 69-75; MARK 14:54, 66-72; LUKE 22:54B-62; JOHN 18:15-18, 25-27
- *The Jewish Trial of Jesus (Phase 3): The Final Verdict*
MATTHEW 27:1-2; MARK 15:1
- *Judas Hangs Himself*
MATTHEW 27:3-10
- *The Roman Trial of Jesus (Phase 1): Pilate*
MATTHEW 27:11-14; MARK 15:2-5; LUKE 23:1-7; JOHN 18:28-38
- *The Roman Trial of Jesus (Phase 2): Herod Antipas*
LUKE 23:8-12
- *The Roman Trial of Jesus (Phase 3): The Final Verdict*
MATTHEW 27:15-26; MARK 15:6-15; LUKE 23:13-25; JOHN 18:38B-19:16
- *The Road to Golgotha*
MATTHEW 27:27-34; MARK 15:16-23; LUKE 23:26-31; JOHN 19:16B-17
- *The Crucifixion*
MATTHEW 27:35-44; MARK 15:24-32; LUKE 23:33-43; JOHN 19:18-27
- *The Death of Jesus*
MATTHEW 27:45-56; MARK 15:33-41; LUKE 23:44-49; JOHN 19:38-37
- *The Burial of Jesus*
MATTHEW 27:57-61; MARK 15:42-47; LUKE 23:50-56; JOHN 19:38-42

SATURDAY (APRIL 4, AD 33)

- *The Jewish Leaders Post Guard*
MATTHEW 26:62-66

SUNDAY (APRIL 5, AD 33)

- *Women Discover the Empty Tomb*
MATTHEW 28:1-7; MARK 16:1-7; LUKE 24:1-7; JOHN 20:1
- *The Women Tell the Disciples*
MATTHEW 28:8-10; MARK 16:8; LUKE 24:8-11; JOHN 20:2

● *Peter and John Rush to the Tomb*

LUKE 24:12; JOHN 20:3-10

● *Mary Returns to the Tomb and Encounters Jesus*

JOHN 20:11-18

● *Encounter on Emmaus Road*

LUKE 24:13-35

● *Jesus Appears to the Ten Without Thomas*

LUKE 24:36-43; JOHN 20:19-23

THESE REFERENCES AND TITLES WERE TAKEN FROM ANDREAS KOSTENBERGER'S AND JUSTIN TAYLOR'S BOOK *The Final Days of Jesus: The Most Important Person Who Ever Lived*. CROSSWAY, 2014.

Matthew's version of the first Palm Sunday includes 17 verses. From these 17 verses, there are six references to the Old Testament: Isaiah 62:11, Zechariah 9:9;], Psalm 118:25-26, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11, and Psalm 8:2. Six different references to six different Old Testament passages in a span of seventeen verses. That's over 33% of the story.

Matthew is doing something here. He is showing his readers that, yes, Jesus of Nazareth is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. What Isaiah and Zechariah and the Psalmist and Jeremiah were promising were all finding their fulfillment in Jesus. Thank you, Matthew.

But here's the thing that bothers me. Frightens me. At the time these events were unfolding, the disciples didn't "get it" yet. Similarly, the scribes and chief priests didn't see it (see verses 15). The reason this bothers me is that all three groups (disciples, scribes, and chief priests) would have known their Old Testament. They would have read and studied and been inundated with Old Testament prophecies. Yet when it was playing out in front of their eyes, they didn't "see" it. They didn't connect the dots to Jesus.

Why? I'm sure several factors are at play. But let me offer you one opinion. Could it be that they missed it in real time (and to be sure, the disciples later understood) because they had preconceived and prematurely formed thoughts about what it was all supposed to look like? Could it be that they assumed they knew what the Messiah would look like and how He would carry Himself? Could it be they knew what the Bible said but didn't really think it would be like that? I think so. I think one of the reasons they missed what was going on right in front of them was because in their mind, what the Old Testament and the "real world" in front of them were two different things. The world and words of God in the Old Testament was then, not now. The God of the Old Testament had His place. The era of the present has its place.

This frightens me because I am guilty of reading my Bible, closing it, and then moving along in the day never associating the world of the Bible with the world in front of me. I forget that God worked in particular places with particular people in real, factual history. Which leaves me forgetting (or never realizing) that He does the same today. Real places. Real people. History. Present. Future. When the Messiah comes, He will be riding a donkey. Do you see it? When the King is near, children will praise God. Do you hear it? The One who is to come will be greeted with shouts of "Hosanna!" Are you aware it's happening? Now?

The first Palm Sunday reminds us to be quick to surrender our God-given imaginations to the ways in which God has chosen to work in in the world. The world in which God worked in the Bible is the same world He works in today. We all have preconceived ideas and notions as to how it is supposed to look. We think we know how it's supposed to be. When we don't surrender our biases, we might miss the Messiah. When we don't put ourselves under the biblical text (rather than standing over it), we try to make God look and act the way we want Him to. And we miss Him. Can you imagine if you were there that day having been a Sunday School teacher your entire life (a scribe?), and you see Jesus of Nazareth riding on a donkey with children praising Him – and you missed it?

May it never be!

Jesus, open our eyes. Open our ears. Cause us to wake from our blind biases and assumptions. Show us what You are doing. Help us make connections between the world of the Bible and the world of today. Give us the courage to surrender our imaginations to the reality and beauty and splendor and glory of the God who is at work in the world.

Holy Monday

CURSED FIG TREE

Have you ever wondered why, in the middle of what we call “Holy Week,” Jesus pauses to curse a fig tree? I mean, in a sense, I get it. No one likes Fig Newtons. If I invite you over to my house for a party, and I ask you to bring cookies, and you show up with Fig Newtons – I will politely ask you to go back to the store and find something better. And you can guarantee not receiving another invitation to my house (grin).

But seriously. The day after Jesus rides into town on a donkey and hears a crowd of people shouting “Hosanna!” – predominately led by children and infants – He curses a fig tree. The impact of the curse is immediate. The tree withers. No one will be making any Fig Newtons from that tree any time soon.

Why? Well, there are host of reasons to be sure. But consider this: though tradition tells us Adam and Eve ate from an apple tree in the Garden of Eden, there is no mention of an apple in Scripture. None. In fact, if you keep reading in Genesis, they sewed their clothes together using fig leaves. Some scholars believe Adam and Eve ate from a fig tree.

Interesting.

The act that brought separation between humanity and God occurred from a fig tree. To be sure, neither the figs nor the tree was the problem. This isn't to say that figs are somehow bad. The rebellious actions of Adam and Eve were the problem. The sin that caused separation between man and God probably happened at a fig tree.

Think about that. Jesus curses a fruitless fig tree on Holy Monday. A tree that represents the separation between man and God. The Monday before the Friday where He goes to the cross. Jesus was on His way to another tree that would restore that separation. The tree that brought the curse was cursed. The cursed One on the other tree brought life.

When Nathanael expressed skepticism about Jesus (see John 1:46), Jesus informed him that He saw Nathanael before Nathanael knew anything about Him. In fact, Jesus said, “when you were under the fig tree, I saw you” (see John 1:48). When Nathanael was “under” the fig tree. Literal fig tree? Yes. But this probably alludes to something spiritual as well. When Nathanael was in sin, separated from God, Jesus saw him. Jesus came to restore what was lost at the fig tree. Jesus came to rescue and redeem and make whole. He sees you even when you are under the fig tree. And He comes inviting you to follow Him anyway. Praise be to God.

Jesus, though we were all “under the fig tree” and cursed due to our sin, thank You for going to the tree that brought us life. Help us to live the free, not the cursed, life.

“Jesus said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you’” (Matthew 21:31).

According to Simeon Zahl, “The Nazareth Principle” refers to the scoffing question asked about Jesus in John 1: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

“The idea,” writes Zahl, “was that Nazareth was a city in the region of Galilee, which was known for its ‘mixed-blood’ and therefore suspect practice of Judaism. Because the carpenter/prophet came from Nazareth, didn’t that disqualify him from being the real thing?”

Zahl continues: “Yet, in life – time after time – the best things come from the unlikeliest places. And this ‘Nazareth Principle’ extends to the fact that out of trouble and wounds, disappointments and closed doors, come often the actual breakthroughs of personal life.”

The more of the Bible I read and process, the more I am finding that God tends to be found in the unlikeliest of places, among the unlikeliest of people.

On Holy Tuesday, Jesus is confronted by religious leaders over and over and over again. In the midst of one of His responses. He has the audacity to tell the religious elite, “Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God before you.” Unbelievable. Those who had studied and memorized and practiced the biblical law for decades were told that women who slept with men for a living have a better understanding of the kingdom of God.

In other words, according to Jesus, if you want to learn about the kingdom of God – go to cheats and the sexually immoral. They understand what it looks like for Jesus to rescue and reign. They understand what real faith and desperation looks like. They are able to grasp who is the actual King of God’s kingdom. Understanding the kingdom comes from the unlikeliest places, among the unlikeliest of people.

One would think that learning about God’s kingdom would be best coming from the religious professionals. But “The Nazareth Principle” (i.e., the way of Jesus) says the opposite. Real faith. Real understanding. Real rescue. Real redemption. Supernatural transformation. The reign of Jesus. These can be found (and learned) through tax collectors and prostitutes.

Maybe we should try to sit at their feet? Minorities. Felons. Children. Poor. Maybe they are the ones who God might be putting in front of us to teach us about Himself? Can anything good come from these? You tell me. Can anything good come from Nazareth?

Jesus, give us eyes to see and ears to hear where You are working. Reveal to us the reality that you work in areas where we least expect. Show us that really, really good things come from Nazareth.

Holy Wednesday

SPY? SILENT? SURRENDER?

Holy Wednesday has traditionally been labeled either “Silent Wednesday” or “Spy Wednesday.” “Silent” due to the fact that the Gospel writers record no verbal words from Jesus on this day. He was “silent” in the sense that the Gospels are “silent” of any recorded action or conversations happening. “Spy” due to the fact that Wednesday of Holy Week is the day Judas begins to execute his “spy” plan. The day he made a deal with the religious authorities to reveal Jesus to them with a kiss. Espionage was being planned. “The thing” would go down tomorrow (Thursday) night. The authorities wanted Jesus. Judas wanted money. Judas had access to Jesus. The perfect recipe for a spy plan to come together.

Let’s think about these two realities for a moment. Holy Wednesday is a day known for Jesus being silent and Judas being sneaky. Jesus says nothing. Judas says he’ll do it. Jesus anticipating death. Judas anticipating silver. Here’s the thing: Jesus knew what Judas was planning to do. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him. Jesus knew the spying was happening. Jesus knew how it would all go down.

Yet Jesus said and did nothing to stop it.

Jesus was silent.

Content. Calm. Collected. At ease. At peace. Tranquil. Silent.

Perhaps we should give Holy Wednesday another name? What about “Surrender Wednesday?” Being silent while knowing your enemy is preparing to betray you is a display of complete surrender to the Father. Total trust. Full reliance. Submission of control. Utter confidence.

Silent/Spy/Surrender Wednesday is a beautiful picture of what trust in the goodness of the Father looks like in action. It’s what it looks like when you know things are out of your hands and everything is going to be okay. It’s the joy you receive when you finally surrender control to God.

So. What about you? How can you apply the ironic aspects of Holy Wednesday to your life? What is going on in and around you that is totally beyond your control? What about it makes you anxious and/or pushes you to take control? What are you not surrendering to the Father? What are you not believing to be true about God?

Take a moment and invite the Jesus who was silent to still your mind and heart. Rest in the real and true and forever goodness of God.

Jesus, help our mind and hearts to be still. To rest. To be quiet. Remind us that You are, indeed, in complete control of all things and work these things together for good.

The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin word for “mandate or command.” For Holy Week, it refers to the command Jesus gave to His disciples during the washing of the disciples’ feet and the Last Supper (see John 13:1-20). I don’t like feet. So, let’s focus on a different event from Holy (Maundy) Thursday, shall we?

Late on Thursday night of Holy Week, the disciples fell asleep while Jesus was praying in the Garden of Gethsemane (see Matthew 26:36-46, Mark 14:32-42, and Luke 22:39-46). Not once. Not twice. Three times. Sleeping! Arguably, when Jesus needed them most, they were unconscious. While Jesus was talking with the Father about the salvation of the sinful souls of mankind, they assumed it didn’t really apply to them very much.

I was recently selected to serve as a juror in a federal criminal case in Nashville. The twelve-person jury I was a part of quickly and unanimously agreed (after only two days of deliberations) due to the lack of evidence, the gentleman in question was not guilty.

But here’s the thing. He looked guilty. The stories shared sounded like he was guilty. Though no tangible evidence was ever provided, the situation reeked of guilt on behalf of the defendant. But we all agreed, based on what we didn’t see or hear, he was not guilty.

Something interesting happened in the juror room after we determined our verdict and waited to be escorted back into the courtroom. As the conversation continued about the case, harsh judgment began to seep from our lips about the accused criminal. We had just declared him “not guilty.” Yet we began speaking of how bad he probably was. We expressed how we hoped this “grace” would finally help him be able to change. We shared comments indicating how glad we were that we weren’t as bad as him. The conversation around the table went from giving a “not guilty” verdict to an obvious shift in tone of “us” versus “him.” That is, “us” as better than - and not as bad as - “him.”

We were sleeping in the garden. We were dozing late at night. We were oblivious that we needed grace and forgiveness as much – if not more – than the “guilty-but-not-guilty” defendant. We, like Peter and James and John, wrongly assumed what was happening in Gethsemane that first Holy Thursday didn’t really apply to us. Or, not as much as it did to the guy being accused in court.

I wonder how often I am asleep. Oblivious? Hibernating? Unconscious to reality? Blindly walking through life assuming I don’t need grace? Or worse, slumbering through life as if I am more deserving of grace than the next guy? Or that he needs grace more than I? May Jesus wake us up from our dormancy so that we might not fall into the temptation of arrogantly assuming we don’t need what He accomplished.

Jesus, wake us up and then keep us awake. Awake to the reality of our continuous need of a Savior. Awake to the sufficiency of Your work on the cross. Awake that all of humanity is made in Your image and loved by You.

Good Friday

GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD

"Then God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good" (Genesis 1:3-4).

"God called the dry land 'earth,' and the gathering of the water he called 'seas.' And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:10).

"The earth produced vegetation. . . And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:12).

"God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule over the day and the lesser light to rule over the night. . . And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:16, 18).

"So God created the large sea-creatures and. . . every winged creature. . . And God saw that it was good" (Genesis 1:21).

"So God made the wildlife of the earth. . . And God saw that it was good" (1:25).

"So God created man in his own image; he created him in the image of God; he created them male and female. . . God saw all that he had made, and it was very good indeed" (Genesis 1:27, 31).

"Yet the LORD was pleased to crush him severely" (Isaiah 53:10).

"While (Jesus) was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, suddenly arrived" (Matthew 26:47).

And God saw that it was good.

"Then all the disciples deserted him and ran away" (Matthew 26:56).

And God saw that it was good.

"Those who had arrested Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders had convened" (Matthew 26:57).

And God saw that it was good.

"They answered, 'He deserves death!' Then they spat in his face and beat him; others slapped him and said, 'Prophecy to us, Messiah! Who was it that hit you'" (Matthew 26:66-68)?

And God saw that it was good.

"When daybreak came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put him to death. After tying him up, they led him away and handed him over to Pilate, the governor" (Matthew 27:1-2).

And God saw that it was good.

"When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that a riot was starting instead, he took some water, washed his hands in front of the crowd, and said, 'I am innocent of this man's blood.' Then he released Barabbas to them, and after having Jesus flogged,

handed him over to be crucified” (Matthew 27:24, 26).

And God saw that it was good.

“They stripped him and dressed him in a scarlet robe. They twisted together a crown of thorns, put it on his head, and placed a staff in his right hand. And they knelt down before him and mocked him. . . Then they spat on him, took the staff, and kept hitting him on head” (Matthew 27:28-30).

And God saw that it was good.

“After crucifying him, they divided his clothes by casting lots. Then they sat down and were guarding him there. Above his head they put up the charge against him writing: THIS IS JESUS, THE KING OF THE JEWS” (Matthew 27:35-37).

And God saw that it was good.

“From noon until three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, ‘Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, my God, why have you abandoned me’” (Matthew 27:45-46)?

And God saw that it was good.

“But Jesus cried out again with a loud voice and gave up his spirit” (Matthew 27:50).

And God saw that it was good.

“Master, you are the one who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and everything in them. . . in this city both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, assembled together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, to do whatever your hand and your will had predestined to take place” (Acts 4:24, 27-28).

And God saw that it was good.

Good Friday.

Jesus, it seems weird to call today “good.” But what You accomplished was and is the definition of good and goodness. You are good and Your love endures forever.

Holy Saturday

WONDER

I wonder what Barabbas did on Holy Saturday. Yeah. That Barabbas. The prisoner released. The prisoner that went free instead of Jesus. The one who had his penalty removed – right there on the spot. No more jail time. Insurrection. Rioting. Murder. Sentenced to prison. Immediately set free. I wonder what he did on Holy Saturday.

I wonder if he realized what had happened. Did he know Who it was that took his place. I wonder - did he ever put it together that what Jesus did for him is what Jesus did/does for all who believe?

I wonder - did he abuse grace?

I wonder - what did the family members of the person(s) he murdered thought?

I wonder - did he lead any more insurrections?

I wonder - did he ever thank God for his fortunate turn of events?

I wonder what the thief on the cross next to Jesus did on Holy Saturday. The last thing he heard Jesus say was something about being with Him in Paradise. I wonder what it was/is like? I wonder how Jesus and the thief found one another. I wonder if he is known as “the thief on the cross” in Paradise. If not, I wonder what his name is. I wonder what he did on Holy Saturday.

Did he understand what had happened?

Did he realize he had zero – ZERO – good works to show for his time on earth?

Did he wonder how he could be in Paradise knowing all the harm he had done to others? Knowing how selfish and greedy he had been?

I wonder if he knew that Jesus, quite literally, did everything for him to be where he was. Everything.

I wonder if either or both of the men recognized their part in their rescue. Did they realize that they did absolutely nothing to go from where they were hours before to where they were on Holy Saturday? Jesus did it all for them. Not part. Not most. All.

I wonder - what did they do on that first Holy Saturday?

Speaking of which, how are you enjoying your unearned and unmerited freedom today? I wonder how you might enjoy Jesus’s full and complete and total work for you. Let me give you some advice: don’t waste it. Maybe take some time and wonder.

Jesus, don't let us waste our freedom. Cause our minds and hearts to relax, be still, and wonder at what your work accomplished for us. Grant to us an eager anticipation of Your power to raise dead things and bring them to life.

**“Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you”
(Psalm 143:8).**

Pssst!

Hey, you. Yes, you. Get up!

The morning would like a word with you.

That’s right.

The morning has a word. A word just for you.

Do you hear it? Can you hear the rooster crowing? The light is coming.

Do you see it? The sun is beginning to emerge. Darkness is being chased away by the light.

Do you hear creation singing? A word of God’s glory being proclaimed from sea to shore and shore to sea.

Do you feel the sluggishness of slumber? God has been up all night working on your behalf. That’s right. While you were doing absolutely nothing, He was at work. His day started when you were unconscious.

Do you hear the word from the morning? You don’t have to get things started. God has already started it all. The word is an invitation to join Him.

All mornings have a word. Do you hear it? Can you see it?

But this morning’s word is loud. Strong. Powerful. Transformative. Life-changing. Eternity-impacting.

The tomb speaks. The empty tomb talks. The morning and former gravesite have a word.

A word of unfailing love.

A word of victory.

A word of hope.

A word of everlasting joy.

Resurrection Sunday

THE MORNING HAS A WORD

A word of eternal forgiveness.

A word of, "I will be with you always. Even to the end of the age."

Get up! Don't miss it! The morning has a word for you.

This morning, especially.

He arose. He arose. Hallelujah, Christ arose.

We have ample material available on the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The Gospel writers do a tremendous job with the details surrounding the Savior's final days. But very little is written about the days immediately following the first Easter. John shares an instance or two of Jesus appearing (see John 20-21). Paul hints at Jesus showing up to particular people (1 Corinthians 15:6). But that's about it.

I wonder what the disciples thought the Monday morning after the resurrection. I wonder what they did. I wonder what their conversations were like.

Have you ever wondered, "Okay, now what?" Maybe it was the day after your baptism. Or a Monday after you rededicated your life to Christ. Or the Monday after you repented of a sin and committed to a renewed following of Jesus. What next?

Never forget that when it comes to following Jesus, we don't have to go and make things happen. We don't have to go and force things. The Christian life is not a "go get to work for God" thing. Rather, it's an invitation to join Him in what He's already doing. It's paying attention to what He's already in on. It's not doing nothing. It's being awake to the something He is doing and joining Him in it. If Jesus is out of the tomb, He's alive and present. Alive and working. Alive and ministering. Alive and bringing life. Our job is to take a step, trusting He is at work, and leaning into the supernatural prompting and revelation.

In Matthew 6, Jesus challenged those listening to His sermon to consider the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26). It's a medicine Jesus prescribes to cure anxiety. I highly recommend it. The birds of the air are always taken care of. Notice especially the morning after a rain; if you look down, you will find hundreds of thousands of worms on the ground (yard, driveway, sidewalk, etc.). I would guess birds don't like it when it rains. It has to be difficult to fly. But perhaps they do? Maybe they know the buffet that awaits after a shower? I don't know. But if they are paying attention, when they awake and the sun begins to shine, God's provision for them is waiting. It's there for the taking.

Perhaps you've heard the phrase, "God feeds the birds, but he doesn't throw the worms into the nest." This is true. But the implication of this is usually followed by a challenge, "Now, go get to it! Work! Grind! Make it happen!" I'm all for that. Work is critical and necessary and part of our calling as human beings. But let's be careful about applying this spiritually. God feeds the birds, yes. No, He doesn't throw the worms in the nest. But He does provide them in fascinating and unique and plentiful ways. When it comes to following the now resurrected Jesus – be like a bird. When you get out of your nest and enter into the world today, look around.

Confusion Monday

CONSIDER THE BIRDS

Pay attention. God has been working all night. He's calling. He's working. He's inviting. He's providing. When you aren't sure what to do next, take a step. He's alive. He's present. He's near. Enjoy the journey.

Jesus, now that you are out of the tomb, we are free to follow You. We can be confident of Your presence in any and all circumstances. Give us faith and courage to put one foot in front of the other and trust You to lead us where You want us to go.

Amen.

