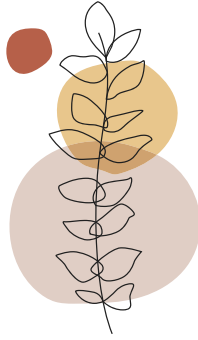




A Wellspring Church
Easter Devotional



For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

2 Corinthians 5:14-17



Introduction

Have you ever felt hopeless? Have you ever forgotten where hope comes from? Does it seem that hope is elusive, hard to hold onto, or that hope is here one moment and gone the next? Perhaps you ask yourself, "What can I do to muster up or discover more hope?"

There is good news: *hope is here!*

My prayer is that this devotional guide will remind you that hope is found in Jesus. I pray you feel encouraged, strengthened, and less burdened by the things that drain the hope right out of you. I urge you to fully place your hope in Christ and seek to be refueled by His presence and His promises for your life.

Will you take the next 7 days (actually a bonus day on Easter Sunday!) and seek to find your hope in the source of life and hope? Find a time each day to read the devotion, meditate on the truth from God's Word and pray directly to God the source of our hope. During this Holy Week, my prayer is that you encounter fresh hope and redefine your faith with hope... in Jesus.

Hope that has a name.
Hope that is real.
Hope that will stay.

Hope that believes, even when it can't see.
Hope that hangs on.
Hope promised with the gift of heaven.
Hope in the coming glory that is *beyond compare*.

I look forward to walking this journey with you. I am eager to celebrate the hope we share in our Resurrected Savior on Easter Sunday morning. I echo these words from the Apostle Paul to you, my brother/sister:

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.” Romans 15:13

Notice where Paul places his hope; he is not asking God to simply dump joy and peace into their hearts without cause. He is asking that, as these believers trust in God, their faith brings joy and peace to their hearts. In other words, his prayer is for God to help them keep believing so that they can experience joy and true peace. In addition, he prays that these believers (and you and I) might experience hope beyond what our human power can create; he asks for a hope powered by the Holy Spirit himself.

You can experience that hope today. Hope is here; let Christ's Spirit guide you closer to Him this Holy Week!

May the hope that does not disappoint meet you each day,

Pastor Chris



Sunday, April 2 *Palm Sunday*

Read: Matthew 21:1-11

Three kings would ride into Jerusalem this day to inaugurate the weeklong Passover feast. Two competing crowns sparring for control and one sacrificial sovereign coming to save. Herod and Pilate came on mighty steeds marshaling hosts of military might. Jesus came on a meek donkey and colt to hosts of hosannas. Two came to subdue, asserting their own kingdom agendas. One came to serve, accomplishing His Father's redeeming will.

Hosannas (meaning "Save us now!") rang out and hopes soared as Christ's coming was heralded as blessed. Quoting from Psalm 118, the people proclaimed what was spoken at every Passover and Pentecost in Jerusalem. This psalm was written to commemorate a conquering king returning to Jerusalem while also foreshadowing the Messiah's reign. And now, the throngs were pledging allegiance to Jesus as their chosen king.

But soon, the cheers would turn to jeers of "Crucify Him," the crown placed would be thorned, and their Messiah's body bruised and bloodied. Jesus would tell Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this realm," as He shed robe and scepter and took up a cross to bring eternal hosannas and blessing to all who

would receive His sovereign salvation.

Take time to reflect on Christ's merciful majesty, reading through Psalm 118 as you prepare your heart to pray.

Pray: Lord of All, as hosannas were raised on this day by those looking for deliverance, I thank you today that my deliverance was secured by Your very life being given for mine on the cross. While loyal subjects willingly lay down their lives for their king, You, King of kings, willingly laid down Your life for my disloyal soul. I am overcome that your redeeming love reached further than my rebellion. I kneel in eternal gratitude at Your nail-scarred feet. I bless Your name above every name and bow my head and heart before You. Whatever in my world is competing for control in and around me, I lift it to You. May I never pay allegiance to any other authority over Yours. You came to this earth the first time as Lamb of grace, and you will soon come as Lord of glory to rule in righteousness. Until that day, establish Your righteous rule within me. I willingly submit to Your crown. Reign supreme over all the kingdoms of my heart.

Written by Jill Rhodes



Monday, April 3 *Cleansing the Temple*

Read: Matthew 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19

Monday would find Jesus entering the Temple to discover moneychangers and temple managers selling “perfect” lambs at inflated prices to pilgrims desperate for the “right” lamb to offer as an acceptable sacrifice. It was too much for the Lamb of God who had come to freely give the gift of grace. Jesus cast out the ruthless robbers, cleansing the Temple and reminding all present whose house it truly was. The sacrificial Servant never lost sight He was sovereign.

The lesson is powerful, and painfully obvious for our lives today. You and I are called the temple of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord cares about the content of our hearts. What He said that day should still ring in our ears: “My house shall be called a house of prayer for the nations, but you have made it a den of thieves.”

I wonder if Christ would characterize my heart as a house of prayer. Other things had found their way into God’s rightful place of worship in the time of Jesus just as they do in our lives today. Pleasure...pride...profit...or other priorities. What would Jesus say to me this week if He walked into the temple of my heart, His home?

Pray: Dear Lamb of grace and glory, how can I begin to thank you for becoming the acceptable sacrifice to cleanse me and cover my sin? Even more, how can I convey my gratitude for making my heart Your home—the very temple of the Holy Spirit? I cannot fully comprehend such goodness. Ascend today to Your rightful place in every area of my life. Cast out anything that mars Your Majesty and cleanse me completely until Your glory crowds my heart and crowns my life. May my praise and prayers rise to You as sweet incense. I pray that my life will shine forth Your goodness and love so that You can truly feel at home in my heart, Your hallowed dwelling place.

Written by Jill Rhodes



Tuesday, April 4 *Jesus is Challenged*

Read: Mark 11:27-13:37

Over and over in these chapters, the authority of Jesus is questioned. The chief priests, the scribes, the Herodians, the Pharisees, the Sadducees all try to trap Jesus with tricky questions so they have reason to arrest him. In one response, Jesus tells a parable and ends by quoting Psalm 118:22-23:

*The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone;
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.*

The religious leaders (the “builders”) have rejected what they assumed to be an ordinary stone (Jesus), but that stone has become the most important piece in the whole building!

Christ is the firm foundation on which we stand. His life and teachings, his death and resurrection that we remember this Holy Week, are the lens through which we should view all reality. Jesus was rejected, but loved by his Father. Jesus promised that we, too, will be rejected, questioned, and laughed at – but we have hope in the knowledge that we are loved and chosen by God. Let him be your rock today, standing firm on the promises of God.

Pray: Christ, you are the cornerstone of my life. Whether or not I always act like it, I know that you are my foundation and my rock. You are not just one piece of my life; you are all of my life. Without you, I would crumble. I pray that you would make me more aware of your presence, your love, and your holiness today. Allow me to rest in the hope of the resurrection.

If you have time, read these verses about Jesus as cornerstone:

Isaiah 28:16

Ephesians 2:19-21

1 Peter 2:4-6

Written by Emily Whitten



Wednesday, April 5 *Preparing for Passover*

Read: Matthew 26:1-16

Two days remained before the high holy days would commence and everyone in Jerusalem was preparing. With many customs including special meals and offerings, the feasts required strategic planning.

It was at this time that Jesus readied Himself and His disciples for the rugged road ahead. Reminding them He would be seized and crucified, He continued to share stories of resolve and told them of future things. He had already given the kingdom call to deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Him in preparation for this very time.

As Christ sought to steady the disciples' hearts, others were stirred up in sinister planning. The chief priests and leaders assembled, plotting to arrest Jesus and kill Him. Judas went to the chief priests, bartering for a betrayal, then prepared to seize just the right moment to hand Jesus over.

In striking contrast, a woman prepared her best offering for the One who would soon shed His precious blood to cover her completely. She brought an alabaster jar of expensive oil with which to anoint the Lord, preparing His body for burial. The disciples rebuked her for being wasteful as they

struggled to preserve what resources remained. But the Lord of lavish love who reclined at the table of a leper and received this tender woman, richly commended her for such a sacrificial act of worship.

Everyone was preparing for something different, yet all could not help but be focused on getting ready for the sacrifice of the Savior.

Where is your heart today and how will you prepare for what will come two days from now? Will you set your heart to follow Christ completely, all the way to the cross? Will you pursue your own purposes this week in place of His Passion? Will you limit your love as you preserve precious resources? Or will you worship wholeheartedly, pouring forth an alabaster offering for all He has poured out for you?

Pray: Lord of love, You prepared for the Lamb of God to be slain before the foundation of this world. From eternity past your plan was to give me a future with You for all eternity through the sacrifice of Your own beloved Son. Prepare my heart now to fully reflect on the Passion of Christ in the days ahead. Steady my steps and make me fully devoted as I deny myself and take up my cross, faithfully following. May my praise freely flow as a fragrant offering joining Heaven's refrain, "Worthy is the Lamb!"

Written by Jill Rhodes



Thursday, April 6 *Maundy Thursday*

Read: Matthew 26:17-56; Isaiah 53:3-7

These passages describe Jesus in his last days; abandoned, forsaken, and alone while anticipating an impossible trial.

In the midst of their betrayal and denial, Jesus shared a meal with his disciples. He knew all would soon desert him, but still broke bread and offered his body for their sins. He knew his closest friends would fall asleep when he needed them most. While they pledged undying loyalty to their Lord, Jesus knew that fear would soon overcome them. Jesus was completely alone in what he had to face.

Because of what Jesus faced, we never have to be alone. This is why we observe the Lord's Supper; every time we eat the bread and drink the cup, we remember Jesus' sacrifice that bridged the gap between God and humans. It is a reminder that no matter how dark our days may seem, hope has made its home in our hearts through Jesus.

If you have items that can serve as the elements (bread/crackers, juice/wine), take some time to take Communion today, alone or with family.

Read these lyrics of this modern-day hymn:

Man of sorrows, Lamb of God,
By His own betrayed
The sin of man and wrath of God
Has been on Jesus laid.

Silent as He stood accused
Beaten, mocked, and scorned.
Bowing to the Father's will
He took a crown of thorns.

Sent of heaven, God's own Son,
To purchase and redeem,
And reconcile the very ones
Who nailed Him to that tree.

See, the stone is rolled away;
Behold the empty tomb!
Hallelujah, God be praised –
He's risen from the grave!

“Man of Sorrows” by Hillsong Worship

Pray: Lord, how can I express my gratitude for your sacrifice on the cross? You experienced the worst of life and death so that I might have life to the fullest. I don't want to live my life without hope - would you remind me of your goodness and your love today?

Written by Emily Whitten



Friday, April 7 *Good Friday*

Read: John 19:1-42

This Friday is called “Good” because the wrath of God that was ours, was poured out on Jesus. From the cross, Jesus declared “It is finished” – in Greek, *tetelestai*.

This Friday didn’t seem all that “good” to Jesus’ disciples. From their perspective, the cross was the end of the line. They had thought the kingdom was coming, but the King was now, apparently, defeated. Hopelessness had a strong foothold in these followers’ hearts because they couldn’t know the future; all they knew was the finality of death.

We have the ability to look forward to Easter. We don’t have to despair because we know the twist ending! While it seems a simple thing to look from Good Friday to Easter Sunday, it gets more difficult to maintain hope from Jesus’ ascension to his coming return. Even though we know the ending (spoiler alert: God wins!), sometimes we don’t live in the hope that this news *should* bring. We lose our jobs, fight with our spouses, fail a class, and experience loss that overwhelms and exhausts us. We lose sight. We lose hope.

Good Friday reminds us that resurrection can’t happen without the agony of death. Morning can’t

happen without the long, dark night. But there is *good news*: dawn is breaking. Resurrection is real. We can live in the promise that when Jesus returns and the earth is made new...

He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away. Revelation 21:4

Instead of a written prayer for you to follow, take some time to think about the stressors in your life. It may be small, or life-altering. Pray that God would redeem those things. Pray for continued hope in the midst of the trouble – hope in resurrection. Hope in a new day coming.

If you would like to speak to a minister about anything, or ask for prayer in the days leading up to Easter, scan the code with your phone's camera and let us know, or visit wellspringchurch.com/contact-us/.



Written by Emily Whitten



Saturday, April 8

Read: Luke 23:50-56; Hebrews 4:1-3, 9-11

Saturday of Holy Week is often obscured as a mere semicolon between the comma of the cross and the exclamation mark of Easter. Yet it is resplendent with the *rest* accomplished through Christ's redemptive work on our behalf!

After Jesus died, devoted disciples hastened to prepare Jesus' body and lay it to rest by sundown as the Sabbath was starting, when no work could be done. The day Jesus died and was buried through the Sunday when He was raised would be high holy days designated for rest.

Unsettling wonders rocked Jerusalem as Jesus died - the temple veil was ripped top to bottom, and an earthquake opened many tombs surrounding Jerusalem (Mt. 27:50-53). Now, the painful product of sin's curse, the decay of death, would be displayed for all to see. Since no one could toil to close the tombs, for three days all of God's people would helplessly gaze upon the grief of the grave, a striking reminder of the cost and consequence of humanity's fall. Then, on resurrection Sunday, many of these same bodies would rise to proclaim the Sabbath rest and restoration of salvation through the finished work of Christ alone.

The One who summoned the world into existence at the sound of His voice had cried, “It is finished” and now rested from His work, “sabbathing” in a borrowed tomb. Through His death He had wrought for us the righteousness we could never earn on our own.

The writer of Hebrews makes clear that our salvation is actually “a Sabbath rest,” and the only work left for us to do is to “make every effort to enter that rest” by believing and receiving God’s gift of grace through the sacrifice of our Savior (Heb. 4:1-3, 9-11).

So, don’t miss this Saturday Sabbath in Holy week. Make today a time of rest and rejoicing for the labor of love given as a gift of grace to you, freeing you forever from sin’s curse of death and decay. Don’t let this Saturday pass in silence as you await the Sunrise of Sunday. Today, lay aside your work and embrace the worth of the complete rest that comes through faith alone.

Pray: Lord of the Sabbath, how grateful I am that Your final cry of “It is finished” ended the work of salvation on my behalf. There is nothing I can do to earn eternal life except to receive and rest in all You did to redeem my life from sin’s curse and death’s decay. Your absolute obedience to the cross and then to Sabbath’s rest in the grave reminds me to be wholly dependent on Your work as well as devoted to Your Word. What a gift to be still and secure in my salvation by grace alone. I rejoice in this Saturday Sabbath as I remember your labor of love for me!

Written by Jill Rhodes



Sunday, April 9 *Easter: The Resurrection*

Read: John 20:1-22, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

If all Jesus did was die on a cross, we wouldn't be people of hope. If Jesus was still in the tomb, he might've just been a prophet. If the stone wasn't rolled away, we wouldn't have much to worship. But Jesus rose from the grave, and we have *much* to worship! We know Jesus to be Lord and King; we can live as people of hope.

The fact that Jesus was raised from the dead means that God can redeem you fully; your past, your present, and your future.

Because of the work Jesus has done, the present hope that we have is grounded in a future reality, and that reality is this: God wins! Christ is going to return, and we get to be with God forever. Because Christ was raised from the dead, your faith in him is fruitful and has purpose, and you are no longer in your sins. In Christ we don't only have hope in this life, but in the life to come. We can have hope because Hope in person went before us, died on our behalf, and rose from the dead!

If we truly believe that Christ was raised from the dead, then we will act like people of hope. This means that everything we do will be informed by the fact that Jesus defeated death.

The way we talk, the way we view money, the way we interact in our friendships and relationships – *everything* will change! This hope will spur us on to share the gospel with total abandon, because it's such *good news!*

Take some time today to celebrate this hope. Praise God for what he has done.

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the hope found in the empty tomb. In rising from the dead, you defeated death for me. I never have to experience hopelessness again. I pray that when things start to go wrong in my life, and I start feeling hopeless, that you would remind me of the hope found in you. I don't want my hope to be found in anything this world has to offer; only you, Jesus.

Written by Emily Whitten

