



HE IS RISEN

A HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Holy Week at Anderson University
A Devotional Guide

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INTRODUCTION

Holy Week has traditionally been one of the most significant periods on the Christian calendar. These days from Palm Sunday to Easter represent the most critical week in human history, because they represent the period that culminated in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, thus accomplishing salvation for those who believe and claim Him as Lord.

This brief devotional guide is written by faculty members of the College of Christian Studies and Clamp Divinity School at Anderson University as well as the office of Christian Life at the University. It is an invitation to students, faculty and staff of the University – along with other friends – to think deeply about these days and celebrate what Holy Week means for the believer.

We are providing this resource in a digital form to make it available more widely. In addition to the written devotionals, you can click on the scripture passage and read the biblical text itself.

Our prayer is that these brief devotionals will be a blessing to you and will encourage you to share the good news of Christ's death and resurrection with others.

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Palm Sunday

Who is Jesus?

Matthew 21:1-11

Tim McKnight

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As he rode the donkey from the crest of the Mount of Olives towards Jerusalem, the entire city unfolded before him in a beautiful panorama. He could see thousands of Passover pilgrims traveling on the road in front of him towards the Eastern Gate of Jerusalem. The Temple took a place of prominence in the scene, its golden roof sparkling in the sunlight. As he descended the Mount of Olives on the road leading from Jericho into Jerusalem, the people began to throw their cloaks and palm branches in front of him. They cried out, "Hosanna!", meaning *God save us*. They called him the Son of David, referring to the Messiah who would deliver them.

The Messiah they sought was not one who would deliver them from death, sin, and Hell. They wanted a savior who would deliver them from the Roman oppression under which they suffered. Although they echoed Old Testament passages that spoke of the Messiah coming in the name of the Lord, these people did not believe that Jesus was the King of King and Lord of Lords. They did not believe that He was God in flesh. To them, he was simply an earthly king who would save them from an earthly oppressor.

How do we know this is what they believed? Look at [Matthew 21:10-11](#) which reads, "And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee." (ESV)

When faced with the question of the identity of Jesus, they referred to him as another prophet, one from Nazareth, not the Son of God. As a matter of fact, in the days that follow, the same crowd that cried "Hosanna" would cry out "Crucify him!" because Jesus did not reveal Himself to be the earthly king and deliverer they sought.

Before we throw rocks at the Passover crowds that traveled with Jesus to Jerusalem that day, we must acknowledge that all of us must answer the same question they answered that Palm Sunday. "Who is this?"

The Jews of the time called him a blasphemer and had him crucified for claiming to be God; they said he was crazy, or demon-possessed. The Ottoman Muslims sealed the Eastern Gate in 1541 to prevent any self-professed Messiah from attempting to fulfill Ezekiel's prophecy that the Messiah would enter through the Eastern Gate. If they thought Jesus was that Messiah, there would be no reason to seal the gate. They too believed he was just a prophet—a mere man. Both groups gave their answer to the question.

How would you answer the question, "Who is this?" as it refers to Jesus. Who do you say that Jesus is?

I love what C. S. Lewis wrote in his book *Mere Christianity*. He said:

You must make your choice. Either this man was, and is, the Son of God: or else a madman or something worse. You can shut him up for a fool; you can spit at him and kill him for a demon; or you can fall at his feet and call him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about his being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to.

This week as Christians around the world celebrate the resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ, a man who claimed to be God, I leave you again with the question regarding Jesus that the people of Jerusalem asked the crowd:

"Who is this?"

What is your answer?



Monday

While There is Still Time

John 12:1-11

Channing Crisler

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Many events filled the week that ended with the death and burial of Jesus Christ. However, only one event filled an ancient Judean house with the aroma of extravagant and unpretentious affection for a soon to be crucified king.

In [John 12:1-8](#), we are brought into a house at Bethany where, among others, we find the recently resurrected Lazarus along with his two sisters, Martha and Mary. As Martha serves the meal and Lazarus reclines to eat with the others, Mary, like a household servant, anoints feet which are divinely slated to be pierced with nails. Only Mary does not anoint Jesus's feet with water but rather with a pint of perfume worth one's entire annual income.

She takes her extravagance a step further by using her own hair, rather than a cloth, to wipe Jesus's now saturated feet. Her unbound hair, often taken as a sign of a Jewish woman's loose morals, indicates that Mary was determined to express her affection for Jesus even if it violated cultural norms.

Unfortunately, Judas Iscariot pierces the beautiful aroma of Mary's extravagant and unpretentious affection with the stench of his own greed and hypocrisy. The one who regularly stole from Jesus' ministry funds and who would soon betray him rebukes Mary by asking, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor ([John 12:5](#))?"

In the face of this biting critique, Jesus vindicates Mary's actions with a telling response "Permit her, so that she might keep it for the day of my burial; for you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me" ([John 12:7-8](#)). Jesus squelches Judas' critique by insisting that Mary has not misused her resources. Instead, she has anticipated that Jesus's week would end in a tomb, and she shared in that death while she still had time to do so — "for you always have the poor with you, but you do not always have me."

In the Christian tradition, the scene that I have just described is often referred to as "Holy Monday." Although "Monday" might be

a bit of a chronological misnomer, the point is that Mary anointed Jesus' feet towards the beginning of "Holy Week." Like every event of this week, Mary's action is a lesson in how we should respond whenever we hear about the crucified and risen Jesus. Of course, in the Gospel of John, the appropriate response to hearing the good news of Jesus is always and only faith. This is in fact the sole reason for which he penned his work — "But these things have been written in order that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God" (John 20:30a).

However, Mary provides a sense, or a "scent," of faith in Christ. This faith is extravagant in its recognition of Jesus's sacrifice. We can spare no expense and afford no pretense in expressing our belief and hope in the love of God which is revealed in the crucified and risen Christ. Just as God supplied Mary with costly perfume that she in turn lavished upon Jesus without a thought for what was acceptable in her day, God supplies us with faith that is to be lavished upon Jesus in like manner.

Just as Mary expressed her faith in a timely manner — that is before Jesus reached the end of His week — we must do the same. Let us daily express our faith while we have time to do so. May we fill Holy Week, and every week, with the aroma of extravagant and unpretentious faith in the crucified and risen Jesus who will vindicate such faith upon His return.

Until then, Jesus says for us what he said for Mary: "*sine illam*" ("permit her"). Permit her and permit him to express their faith in me with extravagance and without pretense while they have time.



Tuesday

What's All the Fuss About?

John 12:20–37

Sherelle Ducksworth

Lecturer in Christian Studies

In 1994, the film *Forrest Gump* hit theaters. Tom Hanks brought to the big screen a lovable character whose life was filled with dramatic experiences, unbelievable odds, and uncertain fate. One of the scenes in the movie revolves around Forrest's impromptu desire to take a jog. Unexpectedly, his jog becomes a run from Alabama to Mississippi and ultimately around the country. As the news spread about Forrest and his unwavering and unorthodox commitment to run, he began to draw onlookers, namely reporters and everyday citizens. They were curious! They wanted to see the man to ask him about his motivation for running. By the time Forrest ended his run, he had drawn a large crowd.

Just like those who gathered to see Forrest run, the Greeks in John 12 had heard about the unbelievable and extraordinary works of Jesus of Nazareth and decided to go see him in person. There is something about witnessing the unbelievable and extraordinary; to have a tangible experience with the unbelievable and extraordinary.

In [John 12:20-37](#), while Jesus is at the Passover feast, some Greeks approached Andrew, asking to see Jesus. The Greeks may have come to see Jesus because the news of His raising Lazarus from the dead had spread like wildfire. Jesus' fame was spreading, and His identity as the king Israel awaited became more evident through His works. The king of Israel had arrived, and seeing Jesus of Nazareth was on the Greek's to-do list.

Andrew learned of the Greek's request and relayed the message to Philip, and they both told Jesus about his unexpected guests. But Jesus has an interesting response. He replies with the word BUT. The word but here shows that Jesus did not respond with a "sure, I will come to see the Greeks." Instead, Jesus informs Andrew and Philip that He was preparing to die. Jesus' response seems quite odd and maybe even cold. However, Jesus knew that the sight to behold was not in that moment but in the glorious death to come.

In his death, there would be something more glorious to see. In His death, they would observe Jesus, very God and very Man, defeating death and triumphing over the sin that enslaved humanity. They would see the incarnate Son completing the reconciliation of humanity and God in His body. They would see the shackles of sin released, and they would see God through the Son.

As Jesus continues discussing the necessity of His death, He assures Andrew and Peter that those who wanted to see Him would, in fact, see Him. Jesus would be present with those who served and followed Him. Unlike Forrest Gump or any unbelievable and extraordinary thing in this world, Jesus is not limited to a tangible location or a tangible moment. He is present with us as we serve and follow Him.

For believers today, life has a way of making us want to see Jesus in tangible ways in our lives. Maybe it's our observance of a move of God in the lives of those around us. Maybe life has gotten hard, and we feel a strong need for a tangible moment with the incarnate Son. Maybe we are looking for some tangible moment with Jesus that can confirm that we belong to Him. If you are seeking to see Christ, take heart in His words to Andrew and Peter. As you serve and follow Jesus, He is always with you where you are. Jesus is near you, and his presence is always tangible, even if it doesn't feel like it.



Wednesday

Who Could Do Such a Thing?

John 13:21-32

Kris Barnett

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“One of you will betray me.” In a different context, the prediction would not raise any eyebrows. In a room full of eager contestants on a reality television series, the prophecy would seem obvious. In a middle school lunch room, the forecast would fit. In these contexts, betrayal seems natural; the Upper Room is not that context.

In the Upper Room, Jesus shared a meal with His closest followers. United in the bonds of fellowship, they reveled in the respite from the strain of daily activities. Jesus humbled the disciples by revealing His servant heart through washing their feet. Throwing them further off balance, Jesus uttered these words, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”

The phrase did not fit the context. These words invaded the warmth of their fellowship. The disciples recoiled. Turning to one another around the table they asked, “Who could do such a thing?”

The reaction of the disciples reveals the shock of such a betrayal. In a group of people this close, we might expect everyone to turn in the direction of the one most likely to betray. The disciples could likely easily identify the one who snored the loudest or the one most likely to get seconds at meals; yet they could not identify the one who would betray their Master. The betrayer moved among them so innocently that none expected treachery. In fact, even when Jesus shares an exchange with His betrayer shortly after the announcement, the other disciples still do not expect Judas.

Like the disciples, we wonder, “Who could do such a thing?” Who could betray the confidence of a friend? Unfortunately, we do not need to look far to find answers. Reality television shows and middle school lunch rooms do not have a monopoly on the market for betrayal. Most of us have felt the sting of betrayal from family, friends, or fellow students. We thought they “had our back.” In disappointment, we discovered that they turned their back or, even worse, stabbed us in the back.

“Who could do such a thing?” Sadly, all the people around us could do such a thing, even the person staring back at us in the mirror. Betrayal is not only something done to us, it is also something done by us. We too have turned our backs and even stabbed a few backs. We, like Judas, have even stabbed Jesus in the back with our own sinful betrayal. We do not like to think of our sin in those terms, but we cannot deny the truth.

Unfortunately, the heinous act of betrayal is all too common, in our world and in our lives. The prevalence of betrayal encourages us to look back to the story and aim our question at a different character. “Who could do such a thing?” Instead of questioning and considering the actions of Judas, we should question and consider the actions of Jesus.

“Who could do such a thing?” Who could wash the feet of one who would betray? Who could break bread with one who would plant a kiss of duplicity to complete the act of conspiracy? Who could extend love and grace to one who would discard it? The answer, of course, is Jesus. Knowing that Judas would betray, Jesus still washed the feet and extended the morsel of bread. Knowing that we would betray, Jesus still extended His arms in sacrifice on the cross. “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” ([Romans 5:8](#))

“Who could do such a thing?” Only Jesus.

Resurrection Prayer

Thank you, Lord for the Good News from the grave. Even though Christ's burial seemed final, death's sting could not hold Him.

So, Lord, today, and always, we acknowledge the Good News from the grave, that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. As followers of a living Savior; crucified, buried, and resurrected, we commit to live our lives as a testimony to Your power and truth.

Though sin is a heavy shackle, Lord, you are a liberator of mankind's sinful souls! Let us celebrate the everlasting truth that our sins are conquered through Jesus' death and Resurrection. We receive your Resurrection as a call to be salt and light in this decaying world. In all that we do, we pray that our witness shouts to the world, "Jesus lives!"

In the mighty name of Christ, we pray.

Amen.

Dante Wright

Assistant Professor of Christian Ministry



Maundy Thursday

A New Commandment

John 13:1-17

Adam Renberg

Assistant Professor of Christian Theology

While common to every time and people, *influence* has taken on a unique space in our cultural moment. Influencers flood social media with carefully crafted images and videos to sway audiences towards certain lifestyles, which includes buying their endorsed products. Influence, here, is a means to power, wealth, or fame. During holy week, we see a radical subversion of worldly influence in Christ's actions—displayed in a water basin and a towel.

In the upper room, Christ begins his farewell address with a display of profound humility. He gets up from supper, wraps a towel around his waist, pours water in a basin, and begins to wash his disciples' feet ([John 13:4-5](#)). This is met with surprise from those present, particularly Peter, who initially rejects Christ's invitation to be washed ([John 13:8](#)). Yet, Christ insists and washes all the disciples' feet—even Judas, who Christ knew would betray him ([John 13:11-12](#)).

The significance of the subject enacting this meek washing should not be overlooked, particularly considering Christ's sovereign Lordship. Theophilus of Alexandria, a fourth-century Christian, eloquently preaches this shocking juxtaposition: "What is more contrary to expectation than this, what more awe-inspiring? ... He who gathers the waters of the sea like a wineskin pours water in a bowl. He who covers his upper chambers with waters, with water, washed the feet of the disciples. He who measured heaven with his hand's span and holds the earth in his grasp, with his undefiled palms wiped off the feet of servants. He for whom 'every knee bends, of those in heaven, and on earth and under the earth' bowed his neck to attendant servants." The Lord over all creation humbles himself to the work of a slave.

The act of washing the feet of the disciples, likewise, is important for understanding Christ's heart for sinners. While Christ makes his disciples physically clean, he also points towards spiritual purity, which is offered on Good Friday. Christ dies on a cross to wash all sinners clean with his blood ([1 John 1:7](#); [Hebrews 9:12](#)). In a radical

display of love and humility, Christ makes us pure before God in his death.

Finally, we might consider the recipient of this modest display—the disciples—and by extension, all Christians. We might even see ourselves in the upper room, particularly identifying with Peter—in his pride and misunderstanding of the Gospel, but ultimately his devotion to Christ ([John 13:7-10](#)). But there is one in this story with whom we should identify with foremost—Judas. We are not only those who reject Christ’s invitation, but those who were once the very enemies of God: “while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son” ([Romans 5:10](#)). Despite our sin God himself kneels, washes our filthy feet, and makes us clean. The Lord bows his neck for sinners.

The traditional title of this day of holy week is Maundy Thursday, taken from the Latin translation of [John 13:34](#): *mandatum novum* (meaning new commandment). “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” The newness of this command is not the call of love, which is found throughout the mosaic law ([Leviticus 19:18](#), [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)), but the nature of this love, which is transformed through the cross. Christ loved us, his enemies, while we were still in sin.

If we are called to love one another in the same way, we are called to a life of humility, sacrifice, and love in imitation of Jesus: “If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet” ([John 13:14](#)). And so, we are called to love our enemies ([Matthew 5:43-48](#)) because Christ did this for us. Christ’s influence on us is not oriented towards comfort or a luxurious lifestyle but towards self-sacrificial humility and love—a water basin and a towel are the marks of a Christ-centered life.

¹ Theophilus of Alexandria, “Sermon on the Mystical Supper,” in John 1-II, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture NT 4b*, ed. Joel Elowsky [Downer’s Grove: IVP Academic, 2007], 87.



Good Friday

Behold the Man Upon the Cross

John 19:1-42

Bryan Cribb

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Today is Good Friday — the day commemorating Christ’s crucifixion and consequent burial. This climactic event of all of salvation history is detailed in all four Gospels, but is perhaps most vividly detailed in our text today, [John 19:1-42](#).

A reader of John 19 could meditate on many things contained in this bowel-wrenching, brutal, but beautiful chapter. However, I want us zero in on a single snap-shot — one scene that shows much about Jesus’s suffering and sacrifice on our behalf. In verse 28, Jesus cries out, “I thirst” — as John states, in fulfillment of the Scriptures. By including this one blunt impassioned phrase, the apostle brings out several important truths about Jesus’s passion.

Perhaps the most obvious truth communicated by the inclusion of this statement is that Christ endured all suffering. Three types of suffering are implied.

Firstly, Christ obviously endured physical suffering. In this verse, Christ is near death. He had already endured much physical trauma — the beatings, the nails, the crown of thorns, the cross itself. The loss of blood had undoubtedly made Him thirsty. Struggling for each breath, Christ lets out one plea: “I am thirsty.” How ironic that the Christ who gave living water, who changed the water in the wine, who could walk on water, now says “I thirst.”

Upon His request, those at the foot of the cross offer Jesus some sour wine. Why did Jesus ask for this? Practically speaking, most scholars believe that the wine offered was a cheap, sour wine that did not deaden pain, but prolonged it by prolonging life. In other words, one of Christ’s last words was a request to prolong the pain and suffering for our sake. By His wounds, we are healed.

Secondly, Christ also endured emotional suffering. The wine offered was also a way of mocking Him. But this was nothing new. Nearly every single person surrounding the cross — whether guards, crowd, Jewish leaders, thieves — mocked and derided Jesus.

Yet, were it not for the grace of God, would we? In one hymn, the song writer wrote, “Behold the man upon the cross, my sin upon His shoulders. Ashamed I hear my mocking voice call out among the scoffers. It was my sin that held Him there, until it was accomplished. His dying breath has brought me life. I know that it is finished.”¹

Finally, perhaps the greatest suffering Jesus endured is not even stated in the text. It is that of the righteous wrath of an infinitely holy God. Other people in history endured a cross, including some of the disciples. But no one ever came close to suffering as Christ. No cross, no nail, no crown, no whip, no words, could match the pain of the spiritual agony suffered by Christ on the cross.

We cannot imagine infinity. But can you imagine an infinite amount of righteous wrath for an infinite amount of sin against an infinitely holy God being poured out on an infinitely innocent Christ? As Isaiah writes, “As a result of the anguish of His soul, God will see it and be satisfied. The Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

Perhaps the greatest truth communicated by the inclusion of this statement is that Christ fulfilled all Scripture. John himself tells us that this was a primary purpose for inclusion of this statement.

The phrase “I thirst” specifically goes back to Psalm 69:21, a Psalm which speaks of a righteous sufferer. But this is not the only time in the crucifixion account where this happens. In fact, every single important detail of Christ’s trial and crucifixion goes back to an Old Testament prophecy. The betrayal goes back to Psalm 41:9. The forsaking of the disciples goes back to Psalm 31:11. The false accusations go back to Psalm 35:11. Christ’s silence before His accusers goes back to Isaiah 53:7. The mockery of the bystanders goes back to Psalm 22. His bones not being broken goes back to Psalm 34:20.

What is your response to Jesus's suffering for you on this Good Friday? There is one response that John desires from his readers. He tells us in [John 20:31](#) — “These have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

So my question to you is John's question: Do you believe that He is the Christ, the Son of God? Do you have life in His name?

¹Townend, Stuart. *How Deep the Father's Love*. 1995. [Video: Performed live by Austin Stone Worship](#).



Holy Saturday

In the Waiting Room

Matthew 27:57-66

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Halftime. Waiting room. Restaurant table. Red light. All places where we sit and wait and try to find something to do. We anticipate the next half. We anxiously look to the door expecting the doctor to arrive at any moment. We look at other people's food being brought out, but ... alas ... not ours. We sit and wait for the light to turn green.

We all know what it is like to wait. To be in the meantime period. To live in the "in-between" moments where nothing is happening.

The disciples experienced a very low moment the day Jesus died. We are not told what they did after Good Friday but we can safely assume they were in mourning. Jesus was their teacher, their Rabbi. In those days, students did not leave the classroom and their teacher to go home for the evening. The relationship between a rabbi and his students was much more intimate. They ate together. They walked together. They slept in the same space. In those days, to be taught meant to learn someone's life, not just the information the teacher passed down.

So, the disciples did not just lose a favorite teacher, they lost their close and personal rabbi for whom they gave up everything. There was no plan B. Their whole world had ended.

They were exhausted. They were in mourning. They were in self-doubt. They thought this Messiah was going to be the political and military leader they had all dreamed of ... but He was now dead. "Maybe I missed something," they surely thought. "I must have made a mistake!" As result, they may have been angry, then fearful. After all, their public ministry with Jesus surely marked them to be next on the religious leaders' hit list.

They truly experienced all the "feelings" the human psyche could experience. While they were feeling these emotions and processing the recent events, they were not doing much. They were simply too shocked by yesterday and too fearful of the future to move a muscle. The thrilling life they had enjoyed with Jesus had now ground to a halt and they just sat there. Actually, being a Sabbath,

they really couldn't move around much anyway!

Holy Saturday refers to the day between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. It is the day of Sabbath when Jesus was in the tomb and the disciples were living in the aftermath of what had just happened.

While the soldiers were securing the tomb and the disciples were holed up somewhere processing what had just happened, Mary and Mary Magdalene sat opposite the empty tomb. They were sitting. They were standing. They were waiting.

Have you ever experienced a season of life where it feels like you are just "sitting there"? You are not experiencing any difficult circumstances or enjoying any pleasurable moments. You're "in-between" these kinds of circumstances. Life is mundane. The past is the past but the future isn't here yet. You're just "blah". Maybe you are coming out of a difficult time where your dreams came crashing down and you don't know what to do next. You think of what used to be, what could've been, or live in fear of what may come next.

James Martin, a priest, states, "Most of our lives are spent in Holy Saturday. In other words, most of our days are not filled with unbearable pain of a Good Friday. Nor are they suffused with the unbelievable joy of an Easter. Some days are indeed times of great pain and some are of great joy, but more are ... in between."

Modern Christians live between the Ascension and the Second Advent. We live in the "in-between" chapter of the great drama of history. However, we are different than the disciples. We know what's going to happen. We know there will come a day when Christ will make all things new. We know there's an empty tomb that directs our eyes toward the sky as we anticipate the future coming of King Jesus.

So take heart. Your season of waiting is not in vain. God does not

waste your wait. Waiting on God never results in disappointment. As **Lamentations 3:25-26** says, “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.”



Easter Sunday

He Is Risen

John 20:1-18

Michael Duduit

Dean of the College of Christian Studies and Clapp Divinity School

Don't you love a good joke? Humor usually arises from the unexpected. A story progresses normally, then takes an unusual twist. There's a surprise ending – something totally unexpected.

In that sense, Easter is the greatest joke in history. That does not mean it was untrue; rather, it describes the impact of Christ's resurrection on the other characters in the Easter story.

It was certainly a joke on the disciples. [John 20:19](#) tells us that in the hours after Jesus' crucifixion, the disciples were huddled together behind locked doors, fearing their own lives were in danger. After three years of following Jesus, it had come to this: fear, despair, a tragic sense of loss. But then, suddenly, He was there among them! The One who had died and been buried just three days before now stood among them once more. They were shocked, then filled with joy. The joke had been on them! As C. S. Lewis put it in one of his book titles, they had been "Surprised by Joy."

That's the way it is when we experience Christ. Bound by sin, we are suddenly set free by God's grace. One theologian calls it "the laughing of the redeemed, the dancing of the liberated." We have all, in Christ, been "surprised by joy."

Life would never be the same for those disciples, nor will it be the same for us once we are touched by God's love through Christ. If you have given your life to His control, you have been given access to a joy that cannot be taken away.

Easter was also a joke on His accusers. They thought it was over, those masters of the religious establishment. They thought they had won. He was out of their lives, His followers were frightened and would soon be back to their homes and fishing boats, His teachings would soon be forgotten. So they laid their heads comfortably on their pillows on Friday and Saturday night. But the joke was on them.

Satan and his demonic allies were likewise filled with devilish glee as they watched Jesus hang on a cross, His lifeless head

dropping onto His chest. The forces of evil celebrated their victory. God's love had reached down to humanity and been slapped away. On the battleground of Golgotha they had defeated Him! But the joke was on them.

For early on that first Easter morning, the forces of evil that sent Jesus to a cross awoke to encounter a glorious, resurrected Christ who had overcome the very worst they had thrown at Him. It was John Chrysostom who, in a 4th-century sermon, portrayed the risen Christ laughing at the devil. On Friday evil thought itself triumphant, but on Sunday the tables had turned. The Divine surprise had been revealed once and for all.

And Easter was a joke on death itself. For mankind, death has always been the great enemy. And at Calvary, the Son of God was swallowed up in death. On Friday He went to His grave.

But the joke was on death, for on Sunday He came forth from that grave, victorious over the power of death. And because Christ conquered death, we share in that victory. Because Christ arose, you and I can share in that resurrection if we are joined to Him in faith. No wonder Paul would exclaim in 1 Corinthians 15:55, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"

Because Christ lives, we too shall live. Because He conquered death, it no longer binds and controls us. The joke is on death – God has raised Jesus from the dead, and in Him we, too, shall rise to new life. And today He invites you to share His laughter, to experience His joy. He wants you to share in the power of His resurrection.

He is risen. He is risen indeed.



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