



# PASSION WEEK EXPERIENCE

EASTER 2019

Name:



wentzville  
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

# INTRODUCTION • LETTER FROM KURT

The week leading up to the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus is often referred to as Passion Week or Holy Week. The term “passion” comes from the Latin word that was used to describe the events of Jesus’ final days on earth. This word literally means “suffering” or “enduring.” For centuries, Christians have honored and remembered the events that happened during the last week of Jesus’ life on earth.

We will look at the major events that take place during this final week of Jesus’ life. Many of the most famous events and teachings from Jesus’ ministry take place during this final week. In fact, around 40% of the Gospels [Matthew, Mark, Luke, John] focus on what happened during this week. Many of these stories are described multiple times in the New Testament and some are repeated in all 4 Gospels.

As we look at each day, our hope is for you to put yourself in the sandals of a follower of Jesus at this time. What would it have been like to be in Jerusalem for the most important week in the history of humanity? What feelings and emotions would you have gone through as you saw the Savior of the world enter as a king and then killed as a criminal?

Please spend some time digging into the biblical accounts and descriptions of the major events that happened during this week. Spend some quiet time reflecting on the significance of Jesus’ words and actions. Engage in the questions that are asked and write your responses down in this book. Finally, spend some time in prayer each day as you ask God to guide you through how to live for Him each day. My prayer is that you experience the passion of Jesus Christ in ways that you have never imagined.

In Him,

Kurt Charlton  
Discipleship Minister

# PASSION WEEK EXPERIENCE OUTLINE:

## DAY 1 | APRIL 14 | PALM SUNDAY

- Triumphal Entry
  - Matthew 21:1-11 □ Mark 11:1-11 □ Luke 19:29-44 □ John 12:12-19

## DAY 2 | APRIL 15 | MONEY MONDAY

- Jesus Clears the Temple
  - Matthew 21:12-13 □ Mark 11:15-18 □ Luke 19:45-48

## DAY 3 | APRIL 16 | TEACHING TUESDAY

- Teaching at the Temple and Mount of Olives
  - Matthew 21:18-25:46 □ Mark 11:20-13:37 □ Luke 20:1-21:38

## DAY 4 | APRIL 17 | BETRAYAL WEDNESDAY

- Plot to kill Jesus
  - Matthew 26:1-16 □ Mark 14:1-11 □ Luke 22:1-6

## DAY 5 | APRIL 18 | MAUNDAY THURSDAY

- Passover/Last Supper
  - Matthew 26:17-35 □ Mark 14:12-31 □ Luke 22:7-38 □ John 13:1-14:31
- Prayer/Arrest
  - Matthew 26:36-56 □ Mark 14:32-52 □ Luke 22:39-53 □ John 15:1-18:12

## DAY 6 | APRIL 19 | GOOD FRIDAY

- Trials/Denial/Suicide
  - Matthew 26:57-27:10 □ Mark 14:53-65 □ Luke 22:54-23:12 □ John 18:13-27
- Jesus Scourged and Condemned
  - Matthew 27:11-31 □ Mark 15:1-19 □ Luke 23:13-25 □ John 18:28-19:16
- Crucifixion
  - Matthew 27:32-66 □ Mark 15:20-47 □ Luke 23:26-55 □ John 19:16-42

## DAY 7 | APRIL 20 | DARK SATURDAY

- Jesus in the Tomb  
[No Scripture references today]

## DAY 8 | APRIL 21 | RESURRECTION SUNDAY

- Resurrection
  - Matthew 28:1-15 □ Mark 16:1-8 □ Luke 24:1-35 □ John 20:1-29

# PALM SUNDAY | SUNDAY, APRIL 14:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Triumphal Entry

Matthew 21:1-11    Mark 11:1-11    Luke 19:29-44    John 12:12-19

## DESCRIPTION:

Today is Palm Sunday. This is the traditional day that Christians celebrate the Triumphal Entry of Jesus into the city of Jerusalem. Jesus visited Jerusalem many times before, but this time was different. His entire life and ministry have pointed to the events that were about to take place during this final week of his life [Luke 9:51].

The city was buzzing with excitement since everyone knew Jesus would be coming to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover festival. Stories about his ministry had spread all over the land, especially his recent miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead [John 11:1-57; John 12:9-11]. The crowds were filled with excitement, anticipation, and hope for a coming Messiah.

Jesus tells his disciples to bring him a young donkey that had never been ridden before. Then Jesus humbly rides into the city on a lowly donkey instead of a tall, prestigious horse as would have been the custom for a king. John 12:15 clearly states this is a fulfillment of prophecy from Zechariah 9:9.

As the crowds flocked to Him, they lined Jesus' path with branches from palm trees and even their own cloaks. This was a sign of celebration people would have normally shown for a king returning home victoriously from battle. These branches would represent goodness, peace, and victory. As Jesus passed by the crowds, they showered him with shouts and praises. They shouted "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and quoted passages from the Old Testament Scriptures which prophesied about the coming of their king.

Hosanna! Though the crowds eventually betrayed Jesus, their shouts of praise were genuine and even prophetic. The word "hosanna" is a combination of two words meaning "praise God and His Messiah, we are saved." This simple, but significant phrase declared Jesus as Messiah and Savior. By calling Him a son of David they declared him King, which was another fulfillment of prophecy.

Since Jerusalem was under Roman occupation at this time, the Jews were being persecuted and oppressed. What a great time for the long-awaited Messiah to arrive with a triumphal entry! But there was one big problem...the Savior they were hoping for was not the kind of King that Jesus came to be. Their worship and celebrations of Jesus were based on false expectations, which is why these shouts of praise quickly turned to insults and condemnation later in the week.

## QUESTIONS:

- Read each of the accounts of the Triumphal Entry listed on the previous page. In what ways did the people treat Jesus as a king? How do these symbols illustrate the true purpose of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem?
- When have you been swept up in a public celebration over a person, team, or special event? How long did those emotions last?
- Have you ever placed certain expectations on God or Jesus? Where did those expectations come from? How can you align your understanding and expectations of God with what He says in Scripture instead of what you think He should do for you?
- How can you get lost in worshipping and praising Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior this week? Set a place, time, and way to do this today!

## PRAYER:

- Reflect on the prophecies about Jesus that were fulfilled, including the Triumphal Entry.
- Praise God that His Word is true and thank Him for what that means to you personally.
- Hosanna! As part of God's creation, continually praise the Lord throughout the day. "Let every created thing give praise to the Lord" [Psalm 148:5 NLT].

# MONEY MONDAY | MONDAY, APRIL 15:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Jesus Clears the Temple

Matthew 21:12-13    Mark 11:15-18    Luke 19:45-48

## DESCRIPTION:

Do you remember what happened with Jesus yesterday? Do you remember the cheers of the crowd and the shouts of praise for Jesus? You would think that Jesus would want to continue that momentum of praise and popularity with the crowds. What he does next may shock you, because it sure did shock the people of Jerusalem. Jesus goes into the busiest and most important place in the city, the Temple, and turns things upside down. Literally and figuratively.

The trouble with righteous anger is that it is so easy to be angry, but so difficult to be righteous. Thankfully, it is possible to be both. Here we see a side of Jesus that seems reckless and out of control, but he is actually very intentional in what he is doing. We do not see a man full of rage that cannot control his anger. We see a righteous response to an unethical system that Jesus has already condemned before. This is actually the second time that he has cleansed the temple courts [see John 2:12-16].

Hundreds of thousands of Jews make holy pilgrimage to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem each year. The Old Testament required Jews to make a sacrifice at the Temple during the festival. Since many traveled a long way, it was impractical to bring animal sacrifices on the journey. So businessmen opened up shops to sell animals to the weary travelers. This seems reasonable, but the problem was they would price gouge the products and force the devout travelers to pay very high prices and exchange rates.

Jesus' actions were not necessarily meant to condemn the practices of sacrifice in the temple as some suggest. His goal was to eradicate the unethical practice of overcharging for the necessary sacrifices. He also wanted to remind people of the true reason the temple should exist: prayer. Jesus says "My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" [Mark 11:17 NIV].

This angered the religious leaders for a few reasons, which caused them to begin their plots to kill Jesus. First, they were the ones who were profiting from the overpriced sales and unfair exchanges. Second, they were probably upset that Jesus would refer to the temple as "my house." Third, it shows that Jesus is assuming authority over the practices and operations of the sacred Temple.

But what does this significant event, which is mentioned multiple times, mean for us? It shows us that Jesus is concerned with the focus of our place of worship, and he does not want God to be associated with unethical practices. The sale of animal sacrifices was not the issue for Jesus. It was the heart behind the people who were taking advantage of those trying to worship God. The main reason for our place of worship is to be a place for prayer and ministry.

## QUESTIONS:

- Read each of the accounts of Jesus clearing the temple listed on the previous page. What was repeated in each description? What stood out to you?
- When have you lost your temper and done something that you regret? What were the circumstances that led you to that point?
- While it is good for the church to be a place for many different types of ministry to happen, do you still look at it as a place of prayer?
- Have you lost your focus on what a place of worship is to be used for? How can you make prayer a main priority in your time at church and in your personal time?

## PRAYER:

- Reflect on the scene of Jesus clearing the temple. Ask God to reveal ways you have lost focus in your personal worship and prayers.
- Confess to God anything that is revealed to you that may not honor Him.
- Pray that everything in your heart, body [God's temple], and WCC's campus would give glory and honor to the Lord.

# TEACHING TUESDAY | TUESDAY, APRIL 16:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Teaching at the Temple and Mount of Olives

Matthew 21:18-25:46    Mark 11:20-13:37    Luke 20:1-21:38

## DESCRIPTION:

Luke 21:37-38 says that Jesus taught in the temple each day and then went out to the Mount of Olives each evening. While we do not know the exact timeline of when Jesus taught all of the words recorded in the sections above, we know that his words were extremely impactful for the disciples and the people of Jerusalem. Many of his sermons took place in the temple courts for all to hear, while some of what he teaches on this day happens in private with only his disciples.

Jesus was a master teacher. He knew how to gather a crowd around him, capture their attention, and then deliver memorable messages. Jesus was much more than just a great storyteller or entertainer... his messages cut straight to the heart. Put yourself in the shoes of those who were listening to his teaching. What would it have been like to hear his messages in the temple as a religious leader? As an uneducated commoner? What would you have been thinking if you were one of his disciples who heard him talk about the signs of the end of the age [Matthew 24-25]?

It would have been amazing to sit at Jesus' feet and hear him tell stories and parables. It would have been mesmerizing to hear him use metaphors and imagery as he artfully explains the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and how everything points to the coming of the Kingdom of God. But take some time and read through Jesus' words again. Do not just skim through these amazing stories and parables. Look at the heart and the purpose behind his teachings.

If you slow down and look at the heart of Jesus' teachings on this day, you will see that he was not interested in merely gathering a crowd or seeking attention. He was not just telling people what they wanted to hear so he could grow in popularity. Perhaps they did not know it at the time, but Jesus was preparing his disciples and even the people of Jerusalem for something big that was about to happen. It was probably not what they thought it was going to be.

A lot of Jesus' words and stories pointed to the fact that bad things were about to happen...and you had better be ready for it. Each of the parables that Jesus tells had to do with being ready and being prepared. When he speaks to his disciples on the Mount of Olives, he says that they will be persecuted, hated, and even killed because of him. In the end, he wants us to stand firm, be saved, and then share this Gospel with others [Matthew 24:9-14]!

## QUESTIONS:

- If you are not able to read all 3 accounts listed on the previous page, just read Matthew 21:18-25:46. List some of the main topics Jesus taught about:
- Which parable, teaching, or interaction with Jesus stood out to you the most? What did you learn about Jesus through this passage?
- What parts of Jesus' teaching were focused on being prepared for the hard times that were ahead? How have Jesus' words helped you through tough times in your life?
- How do you need to prepare and get ready for Jesus' second coming? How should this impact your daily life?

## PRAYER:

- Ask God to reveal ways in which you have not loved Him or your neighbor in the ways that you should.
- Pray for God to reveal opportunities for you to show Jesus' love to others today. Ask Him to give you the awareness and boldness to seize these opportunities.
- Praise God for the promised return of Jesus and the glorious hope for the future.

# BETRAYAL WEDNESDAY | WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Plot to kill Jesus

Matthew 26:1-16    Mark 14:1-11    Luke 22:1-6

## DESCRIPTION:

We do not know exactly what happened on Wednesday, but it is assumed that this is when the final plot to kill Jesus took place. While Jesus was teaching in the temple every day, the religious leaders were trying to find ways to kill him [Luke 19:47-48]. They finally found their opportunity when Judas, one of Jesus' disciples, came to them with a plan to arrest Jesus when he was away from the crowds.

Assaults from enemies are understandable, but betrayal from a friend is unbearable. We expect our enemies to treat us poorly, but when an attack comes from within it is much more detrimental. The David writes about this type of pain in Psalm 55:12-14, "It is not an enemy who taunts me - I could bear that. It is not my foes who so arrogantly insult me - I could have hidden from them. Instead, it is you- my equal, my companion and close friend. What good fellowship we once enjoyed as we walked together to the house of God." Imagine what it would be like for Jesus to keep Judas as a close friend and disciple while knowing what he was thinking and plotting.

Judas' betrayal of Jesus has been remembered and illustrated in stories and art for centuries. He has been vilified as a person who was greedy, bitter, jealous, evil, etc. While some of this may be true, keep in mind that Judas was a hand-picked follower of Jesus. When Jesus predicts his betrayal at the Last Supper, the other disciples did not immediately point fingers at Judas. They did not suspect him, or any of themselves, to be a traitor.

How many times have you thought "if only I could see God or be with Jesus, then I would have a stronger faith"? We have all probably thought something like this before, but look at Judas' experience with Jesus. He was a faithful follower of Jesus who spent almost every day with him for 3 years. He heard all of the sermons, saw all of the miracles, and even performed miracles...yet he still betrayed Jesus in the end.

We may not think that we are capable of doing something so awful like selling out Jesus. Perhaps Judas thought this same way before his awful actions. To take this a little further, we see that after Jesus is captured on Thursday night his most vocal follower also betrays him! In fact, Peter denies Jesus three times! We also see that eventually all of Jesus' followers abandon Him later this week. We are all capable of betraying and abandoning Jesus, yet he is always there to forgive and welcome us back.

## QUESTIONS:

- Read each of the accounts of the plot to kill Jesus listed on the previous page. What was repeated in each description? What stood out to you?
- Have you ever betrayed the trust of someone close to you? How did you feel? How do you think they felt?
- What do you think were some of the motives for the religious leaders to kill Jesus? What do you think was Judas' motive?
- In what ways have you been guilty of abandoning or betraying Jesus? How will you keep your eyes fixed on him and not be lured into denying or abandoning him with your words or actions?

## PRAYER:

- Ask God for forgiveness for the times you have betrayed Him by your thoughts, actions, and apathy.
- If you have a relationship that has been wounded by betrayal, pray for the willingness to seek forgiveness and grant forgiveness.
- Pray for the willingness to show the same love for our enemies that Jesus did. Thank Jesus for his sacrifice.

# MAUNDY THURSDAY | THURSDAY, APRIL 18:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Passover/Last Supper

Matthew 26:17-35    Mark 14:12-31    Luke 22:7-38    John 13:1-14:31

- Prayer/Arrest

Matthew 26:36-56    Mark 14:32-52    Luke 22:39-53    John 15:1-18:12

## DESCRIPTION:

If you are not able to read all of the accounts above, just read John 13:1-18:12. The events that take place on this evening are some of the most important and memorable events in the life of Jesus. It is known as “Maundy Thursday” which comes from the Latin word “mandatum” which means commandment. It is on this night that Jesus gives His disciples the new and greatest commandment of all: *“<sup>34</sup>A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. <sup>35</sup>By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another”* [John 13:34-35 NIV].

John 13:21 says Jesus was “troubled in his spirit” on this evening, and later that night we see Jesus being so troubled that he actually sweats drops of blood [Luke 22:44]. Jesus knew he was about to suffer and die. He knew everything was about to change for not only himself, but for his disciples as well. So he gathers them together for an intimate evening filled with food, conversation, traditions, love, prayers, teaching, and so much more. This is his final moment with the disciples before his death, and he makes it unforgettable.

Jesus gathers his disciples together for a traditional Passover meal just like they had done with their families many times before, but this time it was different. As they were eating, Jesus got up and washed his disciples feet as a sign of humility and servitude. He predicts Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial. Then Jesus interrupts the meal to institute the sacred act of communion, which Christians have faithfully remembered ever since. Jesus reassures them to not let their hearts be troubled, says that he is the way and the truth and the life, commands them to obey his teaching and abide in him, predicts his death and resurrection, and then prays for himself, the disciples, and all believers [John 13-17].

After the last supper, everyone went to the Mount of Olives where Jesus tried to get his disciples to pray with him throughout the night. He tells his disciples to pray that they will not fall into temptation. Then he prays for God’s will to be done, not his own. Judas returns with soldiers and a crowd to arrest Jesus. After a scuffle with Peter and a guard, Jesus performs a miracle and then peacefully goes with his captors.

## QUESTIONS:

- Have you ever had a near-death experience? How would it affect your conversations and priorities if you knew that you were moments away from dying?
- Jesus gives his final warnings, encouragement, and commands to his disciples on this night. What do you think he would say to you right now if it were your last night together?
- List all of the times Jesus prayed on this night. Why do you think prayer plays such a big part of Jesus' final night before his death?
- What would change in your life if you prayed Jesus' words "not my will, but yours be done" each day?

## PRAYER:

- Take a moment to sit in the presence of God. Commune with Jesus as you remember his last night with the disciples before his death.
- Pray to have the same humble, servant attitude Jesus had for others.
- Praise God for the sacrifice of the body and blood of His Son, which enables the forgiveness of our sins.

# GOOD FRIDAY | FRIDAY, APRIL 19:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Trials/Denial/Suicide

Matthew 26:57-27:10  Mark 14:53-65  Luke 22:54-23:12  John 18:13-27

- Jesus Scourged and Condemned

Matthew 27:11-31  Mark 15:1-19  Luke 23:13-25  John 18:28-19:16

- Crucifixion

Matthew 27:32-66  Mark 15:20-47  Luke 23:26-55  John 19:16-42

## DESCRIPTION:

If you are not able to read all of the accounts above, just choose one Gospel to go through. Jesus spends the entire night going from trial to trial throughout the city. He undergoes 7 trials in all, ranging from individuals, religious leaders, and twice with the Roman governor. At some points he speaks, and at other points he remains silent. Despite Pilate's attempts to release Jesus, the religious leaders and people continued to cry out against him. Finally, Pilate gave in to the wishes of the people and gave Jesus over to be sentenced to death.

There are few descriptions of the details that took place with Jesus' suffering on this day. Perhaps this is because those who heard the Gospel stories would already know how gruesome and excruciating these events could be. Before he was crucified, Jesus was beaten and scourged. This was an extremely violent beating that would have ripped and torn Jesus' flesh. Many died from being scourged. Then Jesus was forced to carry his own cross to his death. The word excruciating, which we use for unbearable pain, comes from the two Latin words "ex cruciatus" which literally mean "out of the cross."

While Jesus is in agony on the cross, he does not lose focus. He offers forgiveness to those who harm him. He offers salvation to a repentant sinner. He quotes a prophetic psalm about his suffering and ultimate praise that God has not left him alone [Psalm 22]. He expresses his humanity by saying he is thirsty. He declares God's accomplishment that it is finished. Finally, he cried out in a loud voice for God to accept his spirit into His hands.

Close your eyes and place yourself on that hill outside of Jerusalem called Calvary. Imagine the sights, sounds, smells, and moods that surround the cross. Picture Jesus as he is hoisted up in front of everyone. Picture his hands. His feet. His arms outstretched. His body. His blood. His crown. His accusers surround Him. His mother weeps. Now...picture Jesus' eyes. What do you see in his eyes? What expression does he say to you through his face? As he takes on your punishment and pain, what does he want you to know? Feel? Do?

## QUESTIONS:

- When was a time you thought all hope was lost? How did you respond in that moment? How has God used that experience to strengthen you [and/or others]?
- What image of the crucifixion stands out most to you? How does this image impact the way you speak to Jesus when you pray?
- When did the meaning of the crucifixion start to make sense to you? How would you describe this to someone who does not follow Jesus?
- 1 Corinthians 5:21 says that Jesus became sin for us, so that we may be made right with God. Thank Jesus right now for this! How should this impact your daily relationship with God and Jesus?

## PRAYER:

- Praise God for His providence and protection in the midst of pain and darkness in the world around us.
- Ask God for help in remembering and honoring the importance of the cross in your daily life.
- Praise God and give thanks for the willingness of Jesus to go to the cross because of His great love for us.

# DARK SATURDAY | SATURDAY, APRIL 20:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Jesus in the Tomb
  - [No Scripture references today]

## DESCRIPTION:

The Bible gives no description of what happened on this day. All four Gospel accounts skip over the details this day while Jesus' body is in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. It may be easy for us to jump quickly ahead to the resurrection that happens on Sunday, but today we should feel the weight and reality of Jesus' death. We do not have any records of Jesus' followers looking forward to a resurrection. All of his disciples deserted him and women prepared spices and perfumes for the body. There was no hope and no expectation of a miracle.

For those who had followed Jesus for years, this must have seemed surreal. Even though Jesus often spoke of his impending death, it is clear throughout the Gospels that his disciples did not fully grasp what He was saying. His followers undoubtedly felt as if hope was lost and everything was going to remain dark. However, God would use what appeared to be the greatest defeat to bring about His ultimate victory.

We may sometimes skip over the importance of this day because we know what happens tomorrow. Imagine what it would be like to experience Jesus' death without knowing about the resurrection! Hope may have seemed lost, but it would not be gone forever. God would use the darkest days in history to bring about the greatest joy the world has ever known!

We should take time to reflect on the fact that it was necessary for Jesus to go to the cross so that we could experience joy in him. He did not save himself on the cross so that he might save us through his death.

Use the space below to share your thoughts, comments, sketches, feelings, and emotions of what it would be like for Jesus' followers on this day.

## QUESTIONS:

- What thoughts and emotions do you think his followers had on this day?
- What thoughts and emotions would you have had if you were there?
- Who do you know that is still living without the reality of Jesus' resurrection today?
- How can you turn sorrow into sunshine in your life? In the lives of others?

## PRAYER:

- Reflect on the sorrow and despair that was felt by the believers as Jesus lay in the tomb.
- Praise God for His comfort and nearness in our personal times of despair.
- Thank God for His provision that turns “mourning into joyful dancing” and brings “beauty from ashes.” [Psalm 30:11, Isaiah 61:3 NLT]

# RESURRECTION SUNDAY | SUNDAY, APRIL 21:

## SCRIPTURE READING:

- Resurrection

Matthew 28:1-15    Mark 16:1-8    Luke 24:1-35    John 20:1-29

## DESCRIPTION:

Today is the day...the greatest day in history! Today is the day that Jesus was raised from the grave. He conquered death. He overcame evil. This is a day of celebration and praise when Christians all over the world remember Jesus' resurrection. But when you read the accounts of these early followers of Jesus, this day was really not a day of celebration as you would think it should be.

It is a shock to us that the resurrection was a shock to them. We do not have any record of Jesus' followers expecting a resurrection. Some saw the empty tomb. Some spoke with angels. Some saw Jesus face to face. Through all of these experiences, the overwhelming response was fear and doubt. The women had joy, but they were trembling and bewildered [Matthew 28:8; Mark 16:8]. The eleven disciples and all of the others did not believe the women, and even Peter saw the empty tomb and still did not realize what had happened [Luke 24:9-12].

Jesus had predicted his death and resurrection many times, but perhaps it seemed too far-fetched for them to believe at the time. Perhaps they thought he was being figurative; perhaps they did not think that God's son would die. Perhaps they let their current circumstances blind their faith. Perhaps they let their emotions cloud their knowledge of Jesus' teaching.

Finally, we see that they slowly begin to see the truth. One of the greatest times from the description of the events on this day is "then they remembered his words" [Luke 24:8 NIV]. Sometimes it is difficult to remember God's Words and His promises. Sometimes we forget about the truths that Jesus has said to us through Scripture. Sometimes we get so caught up in our current circumstances that we do not see or realize the miracles that God has done around us.

1 Peter 1:3-5 [NLT]

<sup>3</sup>All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is by his great mercy that we have been born again, because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Now we live with great expectation, <sup>4</sup>and we have a priceless inheritance—an inheritance that is kept in heaven for you, pure and undefiled, beyond the reach of change and decay. <sup>5</sup>And through your faith, God is protecting you by his power until you receive this salvation, which is ready to be revealed on the last day for all to see.

## QUESTIONS:

- When have you doubted something told to you that ended up being true? When have you doubted something God or Jesus said?
- What does the miracle of Jesus' resurrection mean to you? How can you realize and remember this amazing truth in your life this week?
- What grave is Jesus calling you out of? What light is he calling you into?
- Read Matthew 28:16-20. In light of celebrating Jesus' resurrection, how do his final words on earth comfort you? Challenge you? Inspire you?

## PRAYER:

- Pray for those in your life who, like the disciples in Luke 24:31, would have their eyes opened to the truth of our resurrected Lord, Jesus Christ.
- Praise God for the miracle of the resurrection! Thank God for the resurrection of those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior!
- Take a moment to meditate on what it will be like when Jesus returns and "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 NIV].

# IMPORTANCE OF THE RESURRECTION

## 1 Corinthians 15 [NIV, Selected Reading]

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died.

But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died.

But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?” What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever.

Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.