

# A Journey to the Cross

A 40-Day Devotional for Lent  
on Luke 22–23



David E. Woolverton

*A Journey to the Cross: A 40-Day Devotional for Lent on Luke 22-23*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

**The season of Lent in the Christian Church is a time of preparation. We anticipate the energy and excitement around the good news of Easter Sunday and the Resurrection of Jesus. Most of us like that energy and excitement — and rightly so, since it is a radical, life-changing message.**

**Yet, we can't get to the empty tomb without going through the Cross -event. Lent's preparation is a time of soul-reflection, life confession, and introspective prayer with one goal in mind: to be drawn closer to the One who has called us His disciples.**

**I would like to invite you into this 40-day preparation time by joining me on a journey to the Cross of Christ using Chapters 22 and 23 of the Gospel of Luke as our guide. Each daily entry starts with a focal verse or passage from these chapters, moves us through some reflections on the Scriptures, and then closes with a brief prayer. It is meant to stimulate daily self-reflection in your relationship with God. Hopefully it inspires you to draw even deeper into the Bible and towards the One who died for you.**

**Whether you do the journey alone or with someone else or with your family, let Lent be a time when you seek out the Lord in a meaningful way. Trust Him with your life.**

**peace and love to you,**

**pastor david**

## Day 1 - Luke 22:1-2

*"Now the Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people."*

There's genuine irony in these two verses. The opening phrase sets the stage by connecting us to the Passover, the sacred, historical event of liberation in Judaism. After being held in slavery for four hundred years, God sends a deliverer, Moses, to free the Israelites from bondage. On a fateful night, responding to the final plague brought down on Egypt, while the Angel of Death circulated among the Egyptians, and lambs' blood decorated the doorposts of the Jews, the people of God gathered together, huddled around tables of leavenless bread and bitter herbs as they waited for death to pass over them.

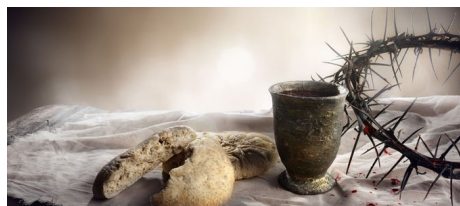
Now centuries later, God sends another deliverer, His own Son, and the religious leaders not only fail to acknowledge Him, but plot to kill Him. Like Pharaoh in Egypt, the chief priests and teachers of the law birthed out of a Passover People set in motion a plan to rid themselves of the only One who can deliver them.

Perhaps they believed that what they were doing was righteous. Yet, verse 2 says that "they were afraid of the people."

Have you ever sabotaged the very thing that would have benefitted you, because you were afraid of the change it would bring?

Sometimes what God has in mind for us confronts in us the very thing that we must let go of in order to find true freedom. We can trust the blood that Jesus shed on the Cross to cause the ramifications of our sin to pass over us.

*Father, forgive the religion in us that wants to kill the relationship with You that Jesus died to provide for us. Amen.*



## Day 2 - Luke 22:3 NIV

*“Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve.”*

This verse is haunting in how it sets the stage for betrayal. Some reflections on these words:

- 1) “Satan entered Judas.” In spite of the fact that Judas was hand-picked to be one of Jesus’s most entrusted followers, in spite of the fact that he had spent three years closer to Jesus—in both proximity as well as intimate connection—than we could ever imagine for ourselves, there was still a welcome mat at the doorway of Jesus’s heart. Satan cannot steal what belongs to Jesus; but we can give it to him...we can sell it too. The fact that Satan “entered” Judas does not let Judas off the hook from being responsible for his acts of betrayal. The Devil didn’t make him do it. Rather, Judas opened himself up—by virtue of the temptations consistent with Satan’s manipulative allure—to the influences of the Enemy of Love. How do we open ourselves up to the same temptations? What dissatisfactions have rooted themselves in our hearts that we would, in response, do the same acts that sabotage love?
- 2) “One of the Twelve.” Betrayal hits hardest when we realize that it comes from one of our inner circle of friends. Betrayal assumes that there once was an assumption of loyalty. Fear of betrayal is itself a temptation strategy of the Enemy of Love. Jesus, unfettered by such fear, invites Judas to His table even though He knows the betrayal that is yet to come. The only fitting weapons that stand against betrayal’s destructive forces are grace-driven forgiveness and divine love. The Cross testifies to their effectiveness.

*Father, forgive the times when we have been Judas—with You and with those who are our friends. Amen.*



## Day 3 - Luke 22:4

*“And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus.”*

How much of our sin is premeditated? The word “premeditate” is literally, “to think about or plan before acting.” I want to believe that the majority of my sinful behaviors are done impulsively—this way I can justify them somehow as being perpetrated in a moment of weakness. While that does occur, if I’m honest with myself, I plan out my acts of sin. Our minds are tricky and deceptive; we craft environments, rationales, mental dramas and justifying storylines to legitimize our boundary crossing.

Whether because we are dissatisfied with our relational boundaries, or dissatisfied with how others treat us, or angry and disappointed that our entitlements were not met, we create a pathway of betrayal. Our gossip of others betrays our loyalty to sisters and brothers in the church. Our passive aggressive acting-out betrays the integrity of our values as followers of Jesus. Our words, our selfishness, our narcissistic attitudes all work together to sell out those whom we are called to love.

Often our premeditations are self-promoting—and thus, they stand against the call of discipleship: “If any would come after Me, let them deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow me.”

Judas planned ahead how he would betray his friend, Jesus. Yet before we judge him, we need to ask ourselves how we have done the same thing.

*Father, forgive us for our sins as we forgive those who have sinned against us. Amen.*



## Day 4 - Luke 22:5

*"The chief priests and officers...were delighted and agreed to give Judas money."*

Betrayal always has a price. The price is not, however, always about money. What is striking about this verse is Luke's use of the word "delighted" to describe the reaction of the chief priests and officers of the temple. Clearly, they had been looking for an opportunity to get rid of Jesus, even to put Him to death. Now, Judas has made that prospect easier. Indeed, they are delighted that they have someone "on the inside" who will create a pathway for their goals.

Yet, what is sad is that it is the attitude of the religious leaders—those who, even in the face of what they considered a blasphemer, a "sinner", are not rather mournful of having to end a man's life. To take "delight" at the prospects portray the deceived hearts of those who have lost connection with the people of God they were supposed to be. Did they not grieve their "necessary" decision? Did they view their prospects solely as an opportunity to "win the conflict"? Did they dissociate from the emotions connected to devaluing Jesus's life—in the very least as a fellow Jew?

Betrayal always has a price...and there are multiple levels to the cost. Here, it cost those religious leaders their souls long before they perpetrated their crime.

Yet God redeems all things. God never wastes a hurt. Jesus willingly chose His path for the redemption of all. And as the Old Testament story of Joseph teaches us, what these chief priests and officers—or your own personal oppressors—meant for harm, God uses for good. (Genesis 50:20)

*Father, while the price of betrayal indeed is high. thank You for paying that cost for me. Amen.*





## Day 5 - Luke 22:14-16

*"When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.'"*

In this section of Luke's Gospel, Jesus sends Peter and John to make preparations for the Passover celebration meal, His last one with His disciples before His death. While they're all at the table, Jesus tells them that He was "eager" to eat this meal with them; and then He adds, "before I suffer." How did that go, I wonder. Was He like, "I'm so excited to eat with you before I suffer...pass the matzah, please." Talk about creating a mood for the meal!

But then Jesus says to them, "I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the Kingdom of God." Two very important points are made here: First, Jesus gives His disciples hope. That word "until" means that there is another side to His suffering, a side where Jesus is alive and well enough to eat with them again. Second, the Passover meal will "find its fulfillment in the Kingdom of God." Through Jesus's death and resurrection, the Passover is transformed as the Kingdom of God is established both in the present as well as in the yet-to-come. In the post-resurrection time, the Passover meal becomes the Sacrament of Communion for all who are Jesus's followers. It is a real-time connection to the One who gave Himself and who now reigns victoriously as King of Kings. And the Passover meal will, in time, become the "heavenly banquet" that all of Jesus's followers will enjoy when Christ returns. The Lord's Supper is meant for us to be a here-and-now anticipatory meal of the yet-to-come feast. Do we "eagerly desire" to share this meal with Jesus? With each other?

*Father, thank You for setting the Table and preparing a feast and a place for us. Amen.*





## Day 6 - Luke 22:19-20

*“And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same way, after the supper He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is poured out for you.””*

We hear these words every time we share in the Sacrament of Communion. They are words that reflect the deep, passionate, giving nature of God. The Sacrament of Communion is not a meal that we consume without reflecting on what it represents, the life that was poured out to provide that new relationship with God. In our church, we celebrate “open” communion—which means that it is “open” for any believer regardless of whether or not they are members of our church or particular denomination. It does not mean that any person can take it indiscriminately. Communion is about a covenant—a covenant in Jesus’s blood, poured out on the Cross for the sins of humanity. John Wesley taught that by virtue of that covenant, indeed anyone was welcome to the table if they truly repented of their sins and wanted to lead a new life, following after the commandments of the Lord, placing their life under His Lordship. It reflects a grace of God that was (and is) freely given, but which cost a great deal. Communion is open for the one who believes and receives that Jesus died for their sins on the Cross, and through His resurrection calls them to lead a new life of faith. Anything other than that cheapens the gift that Jesus gives.

Do you truly repent of your sins and put your whole faith and life into the Lordship of Jesus Christ?

*Father, thank You for what You gave of Yourself. We are so unworthy of such a gift. Thank You for the Cross and what Jesus endured for us. Amen.*



## Day 7 - Luke 22:21-23

*"But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table'...They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this."*

Betrayal is a violation of trust among friends. Such a violation always has collateral damage. At this point in the account, Judas already knows he will be the one to give up his friend. And, implied in these verses, Jesus already knows it too. Yet Jesus doesn't expose Judas. Instead He does several things: First, He still hosts His betrayer at this special Passover meal (at least, here in Luke's version). Psalm 23 reminds us that the Good Shepherd "prepares a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Second, He makes a statement that causes a "conflict of discipleship" among the Twelve. Jesus's indictment of the one, causes relational doubt and distrust among them all. One person's choice to sin always has implications on the rest of the church. Third, Jesus's generalized confrontation puts the Disciples on alert. It is so often true that at the moments of God's divine interventions within our lives, the Enemy of Love comes to the table and seeks to disrupt what God is birthing. Betrayers have the obvious appearance of friends. They are friends. That's what makes the deceptions of Satan so difficult to discern. We don't want to believe that it could be "one of us."

Yet Jesus allows Judas to remain at the table for one reason: Jesus has already chosen His path and it leads to a cross and to an act of redeeming love that will ultimately defeat the Enemy. Therein lies our hope in remaining vulnerable to love while discerning with trust.

*Father, only You see the hearts of people. Invite us into divine love while You grant us discernment in whom to place our trust. Amen.*

## *Divine Intervention*

## Day 8 - Luke 22:24-26

*"A dispute also arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. Jesus said to them... 'the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves.'"*

The Disciples have a way of making me feel better about my own faith journey. They spent three years—basically 24x7—with Jesus, learning from Him, sharing life with Him, watching His miracles...and yet, still caught up in their brokenness, they pull stunts like this one. They're in the Upper Room. They've just shared the most intimate moments with their friend who has revealed about His upcoming suffering and death, and the fact that one of them will betray Him...and the Disciples go from trying to figure out the betrayer to which of them is the greatest!

Yet Jesus once again equips them with another paradoxical principle of the Kingdom of God: the values of this world are upended. The "greatest" is the "least" among them, the "servant", the one who is more concerned about the other than themselves.

Sometimes we too forget that, don't we? It's easy to focus on what we "deserve" by virtue of how long we have been church members, how old we are, how much we give. In Jesus's Kingdom, it's the longest tenured Christians that should be those who understood self-giving love the most.

When do you feel entitled? What happens when you don't get your way? Our reactions betray where our relationship with Jesus may be hurting.

*Father, forgive my sense of entitlement. You didn't call me to be the greatest or even to get my way. Rather, You called me to be faithful to Jesus and the love He died to give. Help me, Lord. Amen.*

*A Sense of Entitlement*

## Day 9 - Luke 22:31-34

*"Jesus answered, 'I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me.'" (vs. 34)*

A lot can happen in a moment of crisis. Fear can overwhelm us and cause us to do or say things that we normally would not do or say. Jesus's prophetic statement over Peter reminds us that when under stress, we regress. It's a very human thing to do. Our minds kick into survival mode and we move into self-preservation, even it is hurts the ones we love.

I'm sure that Peter couldn't imagine denying his friend in a time when He needed him the most. I'm sure in the moment, Peter anticipated fighting the battle of battles in defending his Master's honor and life. Being confronted by Jesus's statement certainly would have caused Peter to feel defensive and offended.

Yet you and I know the story. We know what Peter did. And we know that his denials of Jesus would haunt him even after the powerful experience of seeing Jesus resurrected and fully alive again (John 21). A lot can happen in a moment of crisis. What would I do? How would I have reacted if I were Peter?

In just a few hours, Peter went from brazen "leader of the pack" to scared and broken follower, hidden in the darkness of craved anonymity.

And yet, in just a few days, Jesus would go on to change that outcome yet again.

He can do the same for you.

*Father, whether we intend to or not, there are times when our drive towards self-preservation causes us to deny You. Forgive us, Lord. We are nothing without You. Amen.*

# *A Moment of Crisis*

## Day 10 - Luke 22:39-40

*"...Jesus said to them, 'Pray that you will not fall into temptation.'" (vs. 40)*

There's great power in standing with a friend in a time of need. I can't tell you how meaningful it has been for me to have my close friends say to me, "I've got your back." Hearing those words always strengthens my resolve, giving me greater confidence and courage to move forward in faith. I want to be that kind of friend for others as well.

Jesus just shared a final meal with His Disciples. Emotionally, they were exhausted by their grief and drained by their debates. Jesus needed them to pray, to have His back, but they were tired, perhaps unaware of the immediacy of the pending betrayal kiss of Judas.

Our temptations are stronger when we are weak. Hunger and thirst—literally and metaphorically—are redefined as opportunities to stray from God's design and plan. Physical exhaustion follows emotional pain. Emotional exhaustion follows physical demands. Sometimes our human-ness overcomes.

Yet Jesus, because of the Cross, has become the Bread of Life, addressing the deeper hungers, and positioning us—on our knees—for the strength to face what is before us.

And we need each other as we do so. Each person's temptations may be different. We can help bolster each other, strengthen each other in our weak areas, praying with each other through our tough times. Who needs your prayer strength today?

*Father, bring to my mind today the person I can support through my prayers and my presence. Help me to be their strength even as You have been mine. Amen.*

# *Temptation*

## Day 11 - Luke 22:41-42

*"Father, if You are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but Yours be done." (vs. 42)*

What a moment of vulnerable leadership Jesus shares with us! To be so fully human in his struggle for the suffering He knows He will endure, and yet to choose to submit to its higher purpose, is a mark of great leadership and character. That is a man I choose to follow.

In truth, much less suffering has challenged my resolve. While I am a highly compassionate caregiver, I am not a very good patient! I am one who prays for healing and laments when such healing seems delayed. Often, I want my will to be done.

Yet Jesus teaches by His own modeling that God's Kingdom mission must come first. "Seek first the Kingdom of God..." (Matt. 6:33). Doing so requires that even our pain—whatever the source—must be submitted to its higher redemptive purpose.

Am I ready for such radical discipleship? Are you?

*Lord, You never ask us to do anything that You Yourself have not done. Strengthen us for the journey. We want to walk with you. Amen.*



## Day 12 - Luke 22:44

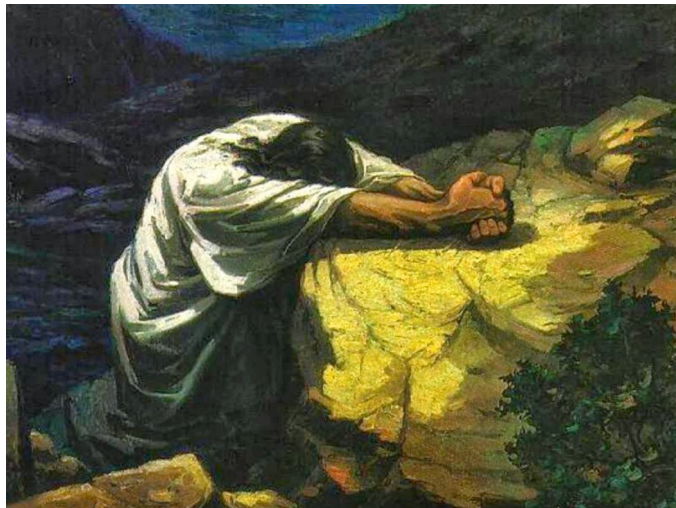
*"And being in anguish, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."*

Jesus's suffering began well before He was nailed to the Cross. His "anguish" in the Garden of Gethsemane was but a taste of what He would endure; but it was very real. He was facing emotionally at that moment what He would face physically within hours. He was in so much emotional pain that "His sweat was like drops of blood."

Picture in your mind what that might have been like for Jesus. Stay focused on that image for a few moments. Imagine His face, His eyes, His furrowed brow, His body language as He "prayed more earnestly." Imagine what He was thinking, what He was feeling, who He was thinking about.

He was there in that moment for you and me.

*Jesus, thank You for what You endured. I have absolutely no personal comparison to truly comprehend what You faced in that moment—and I'm thankful for that. But to feel what You felt, to go through what You did...what an act of gracious love. Forgiveness had a cost and You paid it on our behalf. Thank You, Lord. I love You. Amen.*





## Day 13 - Luke 22:47

*“While Jesus was still speaking, a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them.”*

When we are in conflict with someone with whom we disagree, one of the first things we try to do is to bring others onto “our side”. We don’t like to be alone when standing in battle. Often, we will collude with others who have their own disagreements or their own agenda of pain; our mutual pain accumulates a gathering. Misery loves company. By gathering a “crowd”, we feel validated in our opinions, stronger in our voice, and more powerful in our position to “win”.

Judas colluded with the religious leaders. Both Judas and the religious leaders each had their own respective issues with Jesus; yet they combined their forces to arrest Jesus. Conflict makes for strange bed-fellows. Judas previously had distrusted those religious leaders.

Notice the boldness—and ignorance—in today’s verse: Judas was leading the crowd. A pretty bold position to be in—leading a crowd to betray his friend. It was also an ignorant position for Judas to be in. The religious leaders, in effect, played Judas as a patsy for their own plot—putting him, rather than one of them, into the Lead role, preserving an emotional distance from responsibility. Collusion has a price tag, as well. You become responsible for someone else’s agenda.

Have you ever tried to gather support for your cause when you were in conflict with someone else? In effect, it is a sign of moral weakness rather than superior strength.

*Father, forgive me for colluding with other people’s pain and anger just to get my own way. Amen.*



## Day 14 - Luke 22:52-53

*"Every day I was with you in the temple courts, and you did not lay a hand on me. But this is your hour—when darkness reigns." (vs. 53)*

Have you ever felt like everything in your day—or week, or life—was turning against you? Your alarm doesn't go off and you end up late for work. On your way home you get a speeding ticket. Your kids mouth off to you for no reason—blaming you for their plight in life. You get passed over for a promotion that you've worked hard to achieve.

There are seasons when it feels like "darkness reigns." Even Jesus faced one of those days. And for Him, it was about to get worse.

Yet because He faced His darkness days, we will never have to face ours alone.

While in verse 52, Jesus implies that He did not come to establish a "rebellion", what He has been teaching and what He is about to do on the Cross is nothing short of subversive. Indeed, the reign He is trying to overthrow is not the earthly rule of Herod or even Caesar. Rather, He is overthrowing the reign of Satan, the rule of darkness itself, all by the power of self-sacrificial, divine love. The light of Christ's love radiating down from the Cross exposes that which has been hidden, lurking in the darkness, setting free all who put their trust in its redemptive scalpel. Darkness may rule in the moment, but joy comes in the morning.

*Lord, thank You that I no longer need ever to be afraid of the dark as long as I have the light of Your Cross in my heart. Amen.*



## Day 15 - Luke 22:54-62

*"Peter replied, 'Man, I don't know what you're talking about!' Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered... (vs. 60-61)*

Can you imagine that moment when Peter's eyes met Jesus's? Can you imagine the shame Peter felt as he "remembered" what Jesus had prophesied about Peter denying three times that he knew Jesus? Have you ever done or said something to protect yourself or your reputation even though it hurt someone else's feelings or reputation—and then discovered that they were standing by listening?

Peter obviously cared about Jesus. That's why he followed Him to the courtyard of the high priest. Yet he wanted to remain anonymous, away from the accusations of his association with Jesus...and away from any potential ramifications of that association. He didn't set out to deny Jesus, I'm sure; but the power of self-preservation is strong.

Would I have done the same thing?

Denial is something we often use to protect ourselves from a reality or truth we cannot handle at the moment. Peter's reality was overwhelming. The moment was devastating; but Jesus surely understood, right? After all, He predicted Peter would do it.

Forgiveness begins at the moment of remembering. When we remember, denial slips away and our need for redemptive, healing grace is exposed. That's why Jesus had to walk that walk to the Cross.

When looking eye to eye with Jesus, what do you remember?

*Jesus, thank You that Your eyes portray a God who understands, who forgives, and who loves. Thank you for the Cross. Amen.*



## Day 16 - Luke 22:63-65

*"The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating Him. They blindfolded Him and demanded, 'Prophesy! Who hit you?' And they said many other insulting things to Him."*

The first time I learned that I needed to wear glasses I was in third grade. Even at that young age, I was so afraid of how my classmates would make fun of me that I never wore them. Instead, I kept them in their case and shoved them to the back of my desk, pushing them well behind my textbooks. It was several months later, at the parent-teacher conferences, that my hiding place was discovered. Back then, I didn't know how my parents knew I had not been wearing them; but, of course, now I understand; my grades were slipping and I was always squinting, and I never brought them home from school. My parents were smart! Putting on my glasses became a teacher-invoked necessity, announced publicly in the middle of the class—"David, put your glasses on", "David, you need to be wearing your glasses." The results were swift. Mocking, name calling—"four eyes! four eyes!" chanting down the hall. What made it worse is that the mocking and name-calling came from my friends.

The word "guard" assumes a role of protection. Yet Jesus's guards mocked Him, beat Him and insulted Him. In doing so, perhaps they embodied the sentiments of their "bosses"—the religious leaders. If they were the temple guards or the personal guards of the high priests, they probably were Jews themselves, each having formed their own opinion related to Jesus's guilt in advance of a trial. Hardened by their role and their positional power, they bullied Jesus while He was vulnerable and held captive. A bully is only made powerful when their victim is constrained—physically or emotionally.

Where would I have been in this encounter?

*Jesus, on behalf of all who have mocked or insulted You, I am truly sorry. Forgive us. We don't know what we're doing. Amen.*

*Protector*

## Day 17 - Luke 22:66-23:4

*"They all asked, 'Are you then the Son of God?' He replied, 'You say that I am.'"*

The fact that this first phase of Jesus's farsical trail before the religious leaders took place at "dawn," shows that Jesus's accusers had been waiting all night for this moment. The inquisition was purely to justify the end result they had premeditated, hoping for additional sound bytes to use against Him.

Interestingly, Jesus's response to their question as to whether He was the Son of God deflected ownership of the accusation back to them: "You say that I am". Yet they don't hear it that way. Instead, they twist those words to justify their judgment of Him and to vindicate themselves. Their next steps will include the fabrication of additional false accusations—specifically related to the Roman government—so that the Roman officials would bear responsibility rather than them. They simply wanted Jesus to be eliminated.

It's funny how we can make "justice" conform to our biased perspective.

Yet even in this moment of accusation, Jesus's response remains free from defensiveness. In fact, it—like so many of Jesus's words—continues to be subversive—ironically putting a "confession of faith" into the mouths of His accusers...as well as Pontius Pilate (23:3).

Against all odds, Jesus remains free—emotionally and spiritually, even if not physically. He never loses His sense of grounding. He never loses sight of His mission.

Today, the question is now an invitation: Is Jesus really the Son of God? If He is who He says He is, He's worth putting your trust in.

Who do you say that He is?

*Father, I believe that Jesus is the Son of God. I put my whole trust into His hands. Amen.*

## Day 18 - Luke 23:6-11

*“When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see Him. From what he had heard about Him, he hoped to see Him perform a sign of some sort. He plied Him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer.” (vs. 8-9)*

Jesus is not a performer. Though many of us treat Him that way. We beg Him to answer our prayers and if He doesn't, we then decide He either doesn't care about us or isn't real.

Herod had heard rumors. He wanted to see Jesus “perform”, but when Jesus wouldn't comply, he had no more use for Him.

Herod was used to being entertained. Power and position had gained him an attitude of entitlement. Like many others, Jesus was supposed to do Herod's bidding; at least that's what he assumed. But Jesus “gave him no answer.”

What if He had? Would it have made a difference? If Jesus had “performed” a sign, one or two miracles to show Herod and the religious leaders that He was who He said He was, would they have changed their opinions about Him? Or would they have become even more threatened by Him?

Sometimes defending yourself to a predetermined angry mob may seem worth the attempt; rarely does it change anything.

Jesus's silence was a profound mark of self-defined strength and personal power. Jesus is not a performer.

What would happen if, when we pray, instead of asking God to do our bidding, we asked how—in our situation—we might do His?

*Lord, in everything, I am Your servant. Let my life, in all its complexities, glorify You. Amen.*

*Strength & Personal Power*

## Day 19 - Luke 23:13-22

*"For the third time Pilate spoke to them: "'Why? What crime has this man committed? I have found in Him no grounds for the death penalty..." (vs. 22)*

I find it interesting that earlier Peter had denied knowing Jesus three times and here Pontius Pilate denies three times that Jesus is guilty of a crime deserving the death penalty. Each opportunity centered around issues of truth: Peter, by his denial, seeks to preserve his own life in the moment of crisis; Pilate, by his denial of Jesus's guilt, seeks to preserve Jesus's life in a moment of mob-orchestrated frenzy. The irony of opposites in juxtaposition with each other creates a paradox: The mob of religious leaders who base their lives on the law and justice of the Mosaic System are not interested in the truth of Jesus's innocence. A mob mentality has a life of its own and will not be satisfied until its emotional mandate has drawn blood. Innocence or guilt becomes irrelevant.

Yet it is important testimony to hear Pontius Pilate pronounce Jesus's innocence three times. This important testimony of innocence comes from the very person who is tasked with the role of judge over Jesus's case. The reader of Luke's Gospel is asked to view the clear injustice of this movement toward the Cross—even though Jesus Himself set the course willingly.

Sometimes we say or do things that are inconsistent with our integrity just to please—or silence—the loud voices of those screaming in our ears. We give in to the pressures of the crowd and lose our sense of who we are called to be. But to be a leader calls us to a higher standard. As Max Lucado has said, "To lead an orchestra, a conductor must first turn his back to the crowd." What would I have done if I were Pilate?

*Lord, give me the courage in any given moment to always be true to You and true to myself. Amen.*





## Day 20 - Luke 23:26

*“As the soldiers led Him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.”*

What do we know about Simon of Cyrene? Several things: First, he is mentioned by all three Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) in the context of carrying Jesus’s cross—implying that he was known, at least by reputation in the oral stories passed on as part of the crucifixion account of Jesus. Second, Mark 15:21 says that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. The fact that it doesn’t give more details about them may indicate that both sons were well-known in the Christian community. Third, he was from Cyrene, which is in Libya in northern Africa. He may have been Jewish and in Jerusalem for the Passover. Whether he was or not, and whether or not he sympathized with Jesus in His plight, fourth, he was compelled (“seized”) by the Roman soldiers to carry Jesus’s cross—indicating that Jesus had been so severely beaten at this point, He was unable to do so Himself.

Simon was conscripted to carry Jesus’s cross. His hands touched the blood of Jesus. His shoulders bore the weight of the cross beam that would bear the weight of Jesus’s body. As he walked through those streets behind Jesus, taking in every step of His agonizing journey, imagine what he would have been thinking and feeling. Imagine being that close to Jesus that you were walking in the blood and sweat dropping from the torn flesh of the Lord of Life. Imagine your view consisting of Jesus’s back—raked open by the tortuous scourging He received as part of His “punishment.”

And yet, after he finished his assignment, Simon was able to walk away. How did carrying the Cross change him?

How does it change you?

*Jesus, forgive us for the temptation to be a bystander to what You are doing. Quicken us to carry Your Cross. Amen.*



## Day 21 - Luke 23:32-33

*“Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with Him to be executed. When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals—one on His right, the other on His left.”*

To the Roman soldiers, crucifixion was a common experience. Those who were on “crucifixion duty” had to have developed thick skin, tough emotional boundaries, and strong stomachs in order to endure the sights, smells, sounds and families of those who were publicly dying over long days. To them, though certainly famous by reputation, Jesus was “one among several common criminals.” To us, He was fulfilling the prophetic role of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53.

Interestingly, earlier in the timeline of Jesus’s walk to Jerusalem and to the Cross in Mark’s Gospel (10:37), two of Jesus’s disciples, James and John, ask Jesus if they can be on His left and His right in glory—to be considered “greatest” in the Kingdom. Jesus responds by asking them, “Do you really know what you’re asking for?” Here, on Jesus’s left and right are two criminals. Jesus is classed in humiliation between those who illustrate the need for human salvation and divine grace. What would James and John had thought if they knew that was what their request meant?

We serve a God who gave up everything in order to give us everything. Who humbled Himself to the places of deepest shame in order to bring about a total birthing of new life—to seek and to save those who were lost, and to give His life as a ransom for many. He did it for you.

*Lord, You did not let humiliation stop you from giving Yourself in love. Thank You for such an act of love. I am forever Yours. Amen.*



## Day 22 - Luke 23:34

*"Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'"*

"Father, forgive them..."

Imagine the person who has hurt you the most. Bring to mind what they did to you. Do you remember the pain? The betrayal? The shame? The hurt from the physical or emotional abuse?

Now imagine praying, "Father, forgive them..." For some of us, the concept of forgiving "that person" will come easily, naturally. Time has passed; perhaps we have moved on. But for others of us, we cannot forgive. The pain is still raw. A strong part of us wants them to pay for what they did.

"Father, forgive them..."

Three words that embody the essence of the Kingdom Life to which Jesus calls us.

He never asks us to do anything that He is not willing to do Himself. Imagine what Jesus went through in the hours before and during the crucifixion. What He endured!

"Father, forgive them..."

"Them." To whom was Jesus referring? The Roman soldiers? The Jewish leaders? The people who yelled "Crucify Him"? Us?

Could He have been referring to us—caught within the human condition? As He, who was sinless, became sin, and who by dying on the Cross, set us free from sin's power, imagine how His words of forgiveness were graciously and timely offered.

"Father, forgive them..."

When do you need to forgive? It starts with a prayer.

*Father, I may not know how to forgive, but You do. Show me the way. Amen.*

## Day 23 - Luke 23:35

*"The people stood watching..."*

I wonder if cell phones existed back then, if those people watching would have been recording the crucifixion with their cameras and posting on Facebook the live-streaming event for all to see in real time. It seems like there are more and more examples of people in society who are standing on the sidelines of traumatic events of injustice, preferring to capture the images on camera rather than stepping into the fray to help.

Even though our methods have changed, not much is different within the human condition over the past two thousand years.

Some of those sideline observers mocked Jesus. Others perhaps waited wondering if they would see a miracle—Jesus coming down from the Cross. Very few, however, were there to grieve: Jesus's mother, Mary Magdalene, John...

Some were drawn there simply to watch—for there is something pathetically alluring about watching other people suffering to justify our own pain.

These are all examples of those for whom Jesus was enduring the agonizing death of crucifixion. They—like us—are the reason He came to die.

*"The people stood watching..."*

They may have come hoping to see Jesus "perform" a miraculous act, like Herod himself had hoped; yet they failed to see the miracle God was bringing about by keeping Jesus on the cross. The entire span of history was seismically altered in a moment, and those who had front row seats couldn't see it.

What do you see when you look at the Cross of Christ?

*Lord, open my eyes to see the gracious, miraculous acts of love You initiate each and every day. Amen.*

## Day 24 - Luke 23:35-43

*"... 'Jesus, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'Truly, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.'" (vs. 42-43)*

"Jesus, remember me..."

Lord, those three words formed a powerful prayer on the lips of a sinner just like me. Facing the punishment he deserved by law, he sought Your grace and found it. You met him right where he was. In spite of Your own pain and suffering, You never lost touch with why You were here—to seek and save the lost.

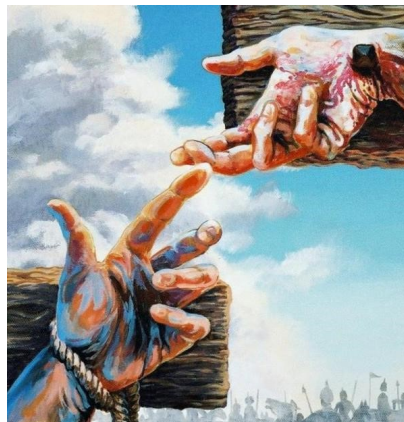
"Jesus, remember me..."

So much about those three words form the prayer on my lips today. As a people we so fear abandonment. We wonder, "If you truly saw us for who we really are, would You abandon us in our sin?" But Your answer is always the same: "I will never leave you nor forsake you..."

"I will remember you."

Thank you, Lord, for walking with us in order to get us to walk with You. Thank you for knowing us by name, calling us by name, and coming to us while we were still engulfed in our brokenness and sin. Thank you for enrobing us in the grace of Your embrace.

*Thank You, Jesus, for remembering me. Amen.*



## Day 25 - Luke 23:43

*"...today you will be with me in paradise."*

I take great comfort in hearing Jesus speak these words to the criminal being crucified next to Him. We don't know his name. We don't know anything about his life and what led him to this moment in time. But we do know that in those last moments of his earthly life, that criminal knew enough about Jesus to pronounce Him innocent and to confess his need for Jesus's grace. We also know that at the moment of his death, he would see Jesus "in paradise."

Jesus said, "today you will be with me in paradise." "Today."

The God we serve is not limited by our chronology. He, in fact, created time. He is the Alpha and Omega (the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, signifying...), the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. That means that at the moment of our deaths, as believers, we will be immediately in the Presence of our Savior.

"Today," Jesus said, "You will be with me in paradise." "With me" also bring comfort. Jesus will be there too. The great Immanuel, "God with us," will be with us again. And we will be with Him.

Death is not the end of the story for those who are in Christ.

If you haven't done so yet, put your trust in Him...today.

*Lord, thank You for the "today" that is yet to come, and for each day we live till that final victory is won. I trust You with my "today", Jesus.  
Amen.*



## Day 26 - Luke 23:44-45a

*"It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining."*

Luke's description in today's verse shows not only his attention to detail (shown throughout his Gospel), but also his skills at poetic hyperbole. While it's easy to get caught up with the different "time" readings between the Gospel accounts (in other words, the third hour or the sixth hour, as to when Jesus was crucified), in truth we tell time differently today than they did back then. Suffice it to say, Jesus was nailed to the cross sometime mid-morning, and starting about noon time it became noticeably and eerily dark. The darkness lasted till about three hours later.

I remember several years ago, Kristine and I were at home during a summer day and we noticed that a major storm was coming. The news reports were making us anxious—especially when they were describing major "cells" were heading our way. But what made us most anxious was the sky—specifically how dark it was getting. I remember it becoming so dark we wondered if we needed to head down to our basement.

Imagine what those people saw as nature responded to Jesus's crucifixion. It affected Luke, we know, since he refers to it as "the sun stopped shining".

Did you ever have a time in your life when the sun just seemed to disappear? How did your faith and trust in God help you through it? How did you want your faith to help you through it?

*Lord, there are times when we feel the weight of deep darkness and we wonder where You are, whether You have forgotten us. In Christ, we know You never leave us. We trust You to bring us through the storm. Amen.*





## Day 27 - Luke 23:45b

*"And the curtain of the temple was torn in two."*

The visual image of the supernatural power of God at the moment of Jesus's death can be seen in this one simple statement. The "curtain" of the temple was a heavy, woven fabric draped within the inner chamber of the temple, separating the "Holy Place" (where incense prayers were offered, the lampstand was kept, and the high priest offered prayers for the people) and the "Most Holy Place" (where the Ark of the Covenant was said to be placed, where God symbolically resided with His people). The curtain was solid, thick and spanned the full height of the chamber, keeping everyone and everything out except for the incense smoke that wafted over it into the Most Holy Place, and for the High Priest, who once a year, on the Day of Atonement, would come before God's throne of grace on behalf of the people of Israel.

The tearing of the curtain was a visible, tangible testimony from God Himself, announcing that because of Jesus's atoning death on the Cross, no other sacrifice was necessary for forgiveness, and no more separation from God's holiness was required. In Christ, full access was granted for all people to come into God's presence. Jesus's death restored humanity's relationship with God.

There is great freedom in receiving God's gift in Christ. In Christ Jesus, nothing can separate you from God's love and grace. Nothing. Today, you have full access to come before Almighty God. The closer you come to Him, the more embraced by His love you become.

*Lord, separate the curtain that has kept us from experiencing Your presence today. In Christ, we receive Your forgiveness and love. Amen.*



## Day 28 - Luke 23:46

*"Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit my spirit.' When He had said this, He breathed His last."*

Death by crucifixion is a gruesome, horrible death. For hours, the weight of your body pulls your lungs into a difficult posture that makes breathing laborious and painful. To catch a breath, you need to press down on a block of wood, onto which your feet are awkwardly nailed, in order to raise your torso and chest enough to capture air. Every breath is agonizing and desperate. Often, after hours—and sometimes days—of suffering, soldiers would break your knees or legs, preventing you from lifting yourself up for air, and causing you to die from asphyxiation.

Jesus had been on the Cross for hours. He was weak from both the severe scourging He endured as well as the tremendous loss of blood and dehydration brought on by the crucifixion process. In order for Him to "call out with a loud voice," He would have needed a surge of last-moment strength to push Himself up, capture sufficient breath, and gain the ability to cry out His prayer. Doing so, took all remaining strength. His body then gave into His missional purpose.

There are times when we face such difficult news, the loss of a loved one, situations that discourage us, or times when we are severely challenged that it feels like we must labor to catch our breath. In those moments, it's important for us to remember that on the other side of our pain is the purpose—the greater mission—to which God is calling us. Holding on to that promise and calling can strengthen us in the moment so that we may find the "breath of prayer."

*Lord, within my difficult moments, I breathe my simple prayer: "Jesus, my life is in Your hands." Amen.*



## Day 29 - Luke 23:46

*"...when He had said this, He breathed His last."*

Most of us take breathing for granted. It's an unconscious, automatic process that starts moments after we are born and continues until the moment we die. Whether we are aware of it or not, every breath is precious.

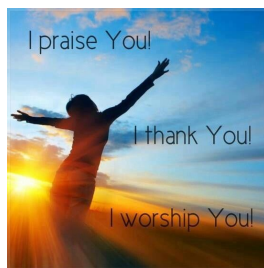
From our faith perspective, God breathed life into humanity. God's "breath" is God's Spirit—the Holy Spirit—that gives life to all. When our days here are finished, that breath leaves us, metaphorically returning to its rightful owner—God Himself.

Luke, a doctor by trade, uses the phrase, "He breathed His last," both to let us know that Jesus died, as well as that His death was purposeful. It was after His "prayer of ultimate submission" ("unto Your hands I commit my Spirit") that Jesus takes His last breath. Surrendering His last breath is His ultimate gift of love for a people who don't deserve it, who cannot deserve it. He, literally, gave His life as "a ransom for many."

Every breath we breathe is precious. When we're under stress, our breathing becomes shallow, causing us to become more anxious. Often the best remedy for calming anxiety is breathing—deeply, rhythmically, a process that breaks the cycle of fear.

God wants us to breathe. He wants every breath to matter. He wants every life to be lived fully—to the capacity it was designed to live. What is God calling you to do with your life...before you breathe your last?

*Lord, thank You for each breath that I breathe, and for the life capacity each breath supports. Let my life—and every breath—give You praise. Amen.*



## Day 30 - Luke 23:47

*"The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man. '"*

The centurion was a leader of a hundred soldiers, hence his title. He most likely had been on crucifixion duty before; he had seen gruesome deaths multiple times. But this day was a defining moment for him. His team would have seen Jesus through the mocking, the scourging, the carrying of the cross, and the stripping off of Jesus's clothes. They would have been the ones who, by the centurion's orders, would have nailed Jesus's, hands and feet to the cross and hoisted Him up to hang for hours towards His death.

When Luke says of the centurion that "seeing what had happened," he "praised God," this was yet another testimony of a life that was radically changed by Jesus. The centurion was a Roman soldier. Yet God penetrated through his armor by the power of a blood-stained cross. Even the one who crucified Jesus, literally, could be saved.

Additionally, at the moment of Jesus's death, Luke uses an unexpected witness to testify to Jesus's innocence, once more announcing that Jesus's conviction was based on false accusations and bogus charges.

In Luke's Gospel we don't know what name of this centurion. But God does. Who knows what this defining moment accomplished as his changed life went on to impact others.

If Jesus can heal the heart of the one who crucified Him, He can heal yours too—as well as those for whom you are praying.

*Lord, soften the heart of \_\_\_\_\_ (add a person's name that's on your heart). By Your grace, draw him/her to know You personally as Lord. Amen.*



## Day 31 - Luke 23:48

*"When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw who what took place, they beat their breasts and went away."*

The intersection of guilt and regret has the potential to be a defining moment, depending on which direction one chooses to turn. If the choice is to turn into one's guilt, bearing responsibility for one's actions, and leaning towards the One who has the capacity to forgive, then such a moment becomes sacred, even sacramental in its possibility for restoration. But if one's choice is to turn away from one's guilt, eschewing responsibility, fleeing the moment and the one hurt, then regret forms the pathway and trajectory of the rest of one's life.

In today's passage, Luke reveals that impactful "moment of awareness" that overtook the crowd when the reality of what was just done to Jesus hits them. They "beat their breasts" - a symbolic and kinesthetic gesture of regret and guilt, of sorrow and grief. Yet, they "went away" - perhaps in shame; perhaps in helpless resignation. Like those who voyeuristically stand by, capturing on camera an innocent person being brutally beaten, yet not stepping in to help, we recognize our blindness to social responsibility only after the surge of lustful vengeance is complete and we are left in the vacuum of our banal human condition.

Yet who knows what happened to those in that crowd? For even in their moment of sin, the reality of Jesus's lordship still met them invitationally, literally, with arms spread wide open.

*Father, thank You for meeting me in the moment of my sinfulness—whether I am aware of it or not. Amen.*



## Day 32 - Luke 23:49

*"But all those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things."*

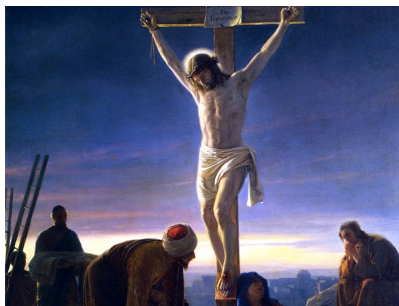
Watching someone you love die is painful. Sadly, I've had to do that quite a few times over the years. Perhaps you have too. And the closer you are to the person, the more intense the pain of grief.

Grief comes in phases. For many years, we have heard of the "stages" of grief, but "stages" makes grief sound linear. It's not. Grief never comes to us in an easy, streamlined package. Rather, I believe that grief is a mosaic—with tiles of emotions and reactions that interplay with each other at any given moment. In fact, as such, I believe that grief is God's way of helping us cope with the vacuum created by our loved one's absence, by our loved one's pain.

One of the early phases of grief involves the paralyzing emotions of numbness and shock. These emotions—along with the phase of denial—help protect us from a reality that we cannot handle. Our ability to move, to function, to think, to feel often is short-circuited or shut down... and we find ourselves "standing at a distance, watching..." as if we're participants in a bad dream from which we will soon awaken.

That's where Jesus's followers were—standing in their numbness, shock and denial, hoping to awaken from the nightmare of what they just witnessed. While the centurion's perspective brought life change, and the crucifying crowd's perspective brought guilt and shame, Jesus's friends' perspective was clouded by their pain. They indeed "saw", but couldn't "see". Not yet. For a mosaic is best viewed from a distance. A day would soon come when God's masterpiece would be seen.

*Lord, heal our pain. We want to see Jesus. Amen.*



## Day 33 - Luke 23:49

*"But all those who knew Him, including the women who had followed Him from Galilee..."*

Men way too often underestimate the strength capacity of women. Even here in this verse, Luke testifies to the fact that when all of Jesus's male disciples scattered when He needed them the most, the women followers stayed on. Each of the Gospels in turn describes how it was the women followers who played a significant role in the Resurrection story.

From our mothers and grandmothers, to our wives and sisters, to our teachers and co-workers, to our friends and our faith nurturers, women have been God-bearers, facing into the difficulties and challenges of raising the Kingdom movement that Jesus birthed. Without women I wonder if the church would have ever really lasted as long as it did!

Not everyone has had a good relationship with their earthly mother. But God has placed women in each of our lives from whom we have experienced grace-in-strength. Think of some of those women in your life that have stood by you, supported you, mentored you, held you accountable, nurtured you. Consider sharing a word of thanks to them— a note or phone call, if they're still alive, or a prayer of thanksgiving, if they're no longer alive. Ask yourself, "How am I a stronger person of faith today because of their influence in my life?" Then, whether you are a man or a woman, ask God how you can be a person of faith-strength for someone else.

*Lord, thank You for \_\_\_\_\_ (add the names of the women mentioned above) and for all that You taught me about being a follower of Jesus through them. Help me to pass on their legacy. Amen.*





## Day 34 - Luke 23:50-51

*"Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action."*

One person may not be able to change the actions of a crowd (although there are historical instances where such has in fact occurred); but one person standing in the gap with those who are broken, impoverished or wrongly accused captures the attention of God. Joseph of Aramathea was a member of the Jewish ruling council, yet his voice could not dissuade those leaders from seeking the death penalty for Jesus. Yet when the circumstances played out, Joseph stepped in to do the right thing.

One person doing the right thing in faithfulness to God always gets God's attention. Loyalty to God's Kingdom mission mandate always bears fruit that changes history. Joseph was a "good and upright man" who took a stand against his peers because he believed their actions went against God's character and plans. We don't know in these verses whether he was a follower of Jesus or simply acting out of a character shaped by the integration of God's word into his life. Either way, his actions put him at risk of being alienated from his fellow leaders.

One person doing the right thing in faithfulness to God always gets God's attention. Choosing to have lunch with a person at work or school that no one seems to want to be around; deciding to stand up for someone's character when others are gossiping negatively about them; stepping in to protect a child or vulnerable adult from abuse... these are seen by our Heavenly Father. How might God be calling you to be a "Joseph" for someone else?

*Lord, raise up more Joseph's for our time... and start with me. Amen.*

**It's easy  
to stand with  
the crowd.  
It takes  
Courage  
to stand alone.**

## Day 35 - Luke 23:50-51

*"Now there was a man named Joseph... and he himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God."*

"He himself was waiting for the Kingdom of God." Sometimes I think that we "church people" lose that sense of anticipation for the Kingdom of God. Sometimes we settle into such a routine of "cozy" that we forget that Jesus came to inaugurate a whole new movement that was designed to change the world... and that we get to play a part in it. Sometimes I wonder what it would take to re-capture that anticipation.

And then I have a conversation with Matt and I see his energy and excitement around what God is doing. And I watch Linda jump at the opportunity to welcome a visitor while she takes them on a tour and tells our story with invitational joy. And then I talk with Dave and hear how God is calling him to pursue ministry and he can't wait to get started. And then I listen to the joy coming from our children's ministry room as the kids learn about Jesus and invite their friends to join them. And then I listen to the Prayer Shawl team as they pray for the concerns of our church and community. And then I hear our Sunday School classes and small groups and Bible studies asking how they can reach out to those in need. And then I watch how we support each other through difficult times...

In Christ, we are called to live out that Kingdom movement now—even as we wait for its culmination yet to come. What needs to happen in you for you to anticipate with excitement what God wants to do though you today?

*Lord, thank You for helping me see the evidence of Your Kingdom here and now. Help me to be this evidence for others too. Amen.*



## Day 36 - Luke 23:52

*"Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus's body."*

Joseph was a Pharisee in the Jewish ruling council. He risked a great deal first, by going against his fellow Pharisees, and second, by going to Pontius Pilate to ask for Jesus's body. "Guilty by association" might have been the accusation against him from either camp. Yet he did it anyway... because it was the right thing.

There's something "sacramental" about asking for Jesus's body.

When we take communion at church and we hear those words spoken over the elements of bread and wine—"This is the body of Christ, broken for you," "This is the blood of Christ, shed for you"—we have only a glimpse of what Joseph experienced, full on and in its most raw and ravaged form. Joseph physically engaged the broken body of Jesus, the blood of the Lord staining every inch of it.

*"The body of Christ, broken for you."*

As the church, the only way for us to find healing—healing for our brokenness both individually and corporately—is to ask for, and receive, Jesus's body. What Jesus did on the Cross was for you and me. All of our individual needs, wants, preferences, entitlements, hopes, dreams, challenges, excuses... must be filtered through the visual, tangible broken body of Jesus. His blood not only redeems all our brokenness, it restores our fellowship- with God and with one another.

The invitation is to come to the Cross—where Jesus died for you—and to ask for Jesus's body. With Him, you will find healing.

*Lord, we are so unworthy of such a great act of love. Only Jesus can heal us. Amen.*



## Day 37 - Luke 23:52-53

*“Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus’s body. Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid.”*

Read those two verses again. Allow your mind to imagine the scene—the sights, the smells, the sounds, the intentionality... the care. Joseph attended to each detail with compassion and honor—a stark contrast to those emotions which were present in putting Jesus on the cross. Imagine Joseph carrying out the arrangements, navigating the procession to a new, unused tomb hewn into the rock—a simple cave—like ending, strangely reminiscent of Jesus’s earthly beginning—a manger, in an animal cave. From birth to death to resurrection wrapped in “swaddling” clothes in preparation for what God would do. No royal garments. No regal placement. Humble beginning, humiliating ending. God redeems it all.

God always makes a way. God always meets us in our present need.

*Father, thank You for bearing us through the hard times and always bringing us to a place of rest in Your grace. Amen.*



## Day 38 - Luke 23:55

*"The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how His body was laid in it."*

When I read this verse I imagine a small group of women, clad in black mourning garments and head coverings befitting women in those days, skulking surreptitiously in and among trees and rocks in the shadows of the late afternoon- all as they followed Joseph. They wanted...no, they needed to find the location of the tomb where Jesus would be buried. Their irrepressible love and devotion for Him compelled them. So they followed, and they watched, and they planned out what yet needed to be done. Joseph, after all, in spite of all his compassion, would not do it right, preparing Jesus's body for burial.

When someone we care about dies, we need to do something, anything in response to our pain.

Mary, Jesus's mother, would need to be consoled. Jesus's friends...those remaining of His disciples...would need food. And Jesus...they would come back and finish preparing His body.

In our day, we do the same thing. Many times, we make meals, a necessity, even in grief. Acts of love and grace are meant to keep us connected to community when everything in us wants to isolate ourselves in our pain. To walk with someone as they navigate through grief is one of the most precious and priceless gifts we can give.

Who in your circles needs your act of love today? When you look for it, what need do you see that you can meet?

*Lord, thank You for putting us into the community of faith here at our church. Help me to be a vessel through whom You work to bring comfort. Amen.*

Saved  
by  
Grace

## Day 39 - Luke 23:56

*"Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment."*

In spite of all that they had been through, in spite of the tortuous death of their friend, in spite of the devastating blow to the vision of the Kingdom of God that Jesus had inspired, in spite of their gut-wrenching grief... they "rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment".

In spite of all their loss, they put their hope in the God of the future by remembering God's faithfulness in the past.

As they waited, they remembered. They rested in the God of Promise. Soon they would discover that God would redeem their pain and deliver them once again.

Sometimes waiting for God to act is hard. Sometimes we lose heart or lose hope. Yet God promises new life to all who trust Him.

Six hundred years before Jesus, the prophet Habakkuk asked God when He would act on behalf of His people. Yet ultimately, when faced with loss in the midst of waiting, Habakkuk's words call us to worship. Perhaps his words in Habakkuk 3: 17-19 are your prayer.

*"Though the fig tree does not bud and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pens and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to tread on the heights."*



## Day 40 - Luke 9:23-24

*"Then Jesus said to them all: 'Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.'"*

What does the Cross of Christ mean to you personally? What does it mean for the mission of the church? What does it mean for our present world?

As followers of Jesus, we cannot come to the Resurrection without first going through the Cross-Event. Taking up our cross daily means that as followers of Jesus, our lives need to reflect:

- Love-of both believers and non-believers, of friend and enemy, of those we agree with and those we don't.
- Forgiveness—because Jesus died for both the offended as well as the offender- and we have been both ourselves.
- Self-Sacrifice—what does it mean for us to be more concerned with someone else's needs than our own?
- Kingdom-Mission—that our lives are meant for something God-sized and significant—no matter how insignificant you or I may feel.

In this Lenten journey, what has God been speaking into your life? What will you do about it?

*Lord, I give You my life, fully and without reservation. Use me, Lord, to reflect Your glory, in Jesus's name. Amen.*

