



Palm Branches, **Thorns, and the** **Empty Tomb**

A free 8-day reading plan for Palm Sunday
through Easter Sunday

By pastor and best-selling author Dr. Paul David Tripp



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Introduction

As we begin Holy Week, where we remember the sacrifice, suffering, and resurrection of our Savior, it's good to give ourselves to humble and thankful mourning. Yes, we should be rejoicing people because we have in the redemption that is ours in Christ Jesus eternal reason to rejoice. But this side of our final home, our rejoicing should be mixed with mourning as we witness, experience, and, sadly, give way to the presence and power of evil.

Something is wrong with us if we can look around and look inside and not mourn. You don't have to look very far to see that we live, work, and relate in a world that has been twisted and bent by sin. The sin-scarred condition of the world is evident in your heart, your home, your neighborhood, and your church. We see it in government, politics, business, education, entertainment, and the internet.

In Romans 8, Paul captures the sad condition of the world in three provocative phrases that should break our hearts:

“subjected to futility” (v. 20)

“its bondage to corruption” (v. 21)

“in the pains of childbirth” (v. 22)

Mourning, though painful, does something wonderful to you. Christ taught in the Sermon on the Mount that those who mourn are blessed. These sad realities that cause you to weep also cause you to cry out for the help, rescue, forgiveness, and deliverance of a Redeemer. Jesus said that if you mourn, you will be comforted. He's not talking about the comfort of elevated feelings. He's talking about the comfort of the presence and grace of a Redeemer, who meets you in your mourning, hears your cries for help, comes to you in saving mercy, and wraps arms of eternal love around you. It's the comfort of knowing that you're forgiven, being restored, now living in a reconciled relationship with the one who made you, and now living with your destiny secure.

Mourning sin—past, present, and future—is the first step in seeking and celebrating the divine grace that is the hope of everyone whose heart has been made able to see by that very same grace. So it is right and beneficial to take a week of the year to reevaluate, recalibrate, and have the values of our hearts clarified once again.

During these next eight days, may your mourning increase so that your joy may deepen. May you groan more so that you would pray more. May your sadness ignite your celebration. And may all of this result in blessings that are too big and too obvious to miss.

God bless,

Paul David Tripp



Day 1

Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday is popularly known as the “triumphal entry.” The gospel writers record the final march of Jesus through Bethany and on to Jerusalem, and then his death. It’s a Biblical story that you are probably very familiar with. But the problem with familiar scenes is twofold:

1. Because a story is so familiar, we often think that we know more about it than we actually do.
2. Because a scene is familiar, we don’t give it the kind of attention we did when it was new to us, and this prevents us from learning more.

This is perhaps one of the most layered stories in Scripture. So much more is happening than what appears on the surface. There is more going on than Jesus entering the final stage of his work on earth in humility and majesty. There is more going on than a multitude worshiping him as the Messiah King. Let me suggest some words that unpack this moment.

1. Fulfillment

In this moment, Jesus is very aware of who he is and what he has been called to do. He knows that he is the direct fulfillment of holy and ancient prophecies. He is acting not with random spontaneity, but with a careful sense of who he is and the detailed specifics of what he has been called to do. He is not caught up in the moment, but rather motivated by an ancient and sovereign plan that he would be in this moment, at this place, doing these specific things. His heart is not moved by popular acclaim but by the will of his Father. What he does and what he directs the disciples to do is done with a spirit of calling, submission, and active obedience.

2. Humility

Jesus, riding on the colt of a donkey, is not playing to the crowd. He is the King of kings, the Lord of lords. He has come to sit on the throne of David to set up a kingdom that will have no end, yet this moment is not about him. It’s not about how much the crowd loves him. It’s not about how big the crowd is or how exuberant their celebration is. This moment is about one thing: the redemptive

mission that was the reason for his birth, his righteous life, everything he taught, every miraculous act, his final trip to Jerusalem, his trial, his suffering, his death, and his resurrection. He did not come to collect followers who would deliver fame and power to him. He came to seek and to save the lost, and to do that, he had to be willing to humble himself, suffer, and die. The greatest man who ever lived was also the humblest man who ever lived.

3. Majesty

At the very same time, this moment in the life of Jesus is colored with glory and majesty. This is the King of kings. This is the promised Messiah. This is the Son of David. Here comes a conquering King. From that horrible moment of disobedience in the garden, humanity has cried for the coming of this King. He is coming to defeat what we could not defeat. He is coming to give what we could never earn. He is coming to reign forever and ever and, in his reign, to fix everything that sin has broken. He has not come to defeat physical kings and to set up an earthly kingdom. He will not bring down Rome and sit on Caesar's throne. He will not deliver less than this, but infinitely more. He is coming to set up a global and eternal kingdom that will result in a new heavens and a new earth, where peace and righteousness will reign forever. In this moment, the King has come to take his rightful throne.

4. Misunderstanding

The crowd has no idea who Jesus actually is and what he has really come to do. They cry, "Hosanna" (which means, "Save us"), but the salvation they are looking for is temporal and political. They think the Messiah will set up an earthly kingdom that will break the back of Roman rule. This is why Jesus cannot be distracted by the adulatory desires of the crowd around him. He knows the hearts of people and how fickle they can be. Though on the road to Bethany he was heralded by cries of "Hosanna," in a few days in Jerusalem he will be cursed by a crowd of similar people, who will cry, "Crucify him." The crowd speaks in fulfillment of prophecy, but they speak about things they don't fully understand. Jesus came not to take momentary power, but to die in order to deliver eternal life. His crown would be made of thorns and his seat would be a cross. Soon the voices of the celebrants will be silenced and he will be reviled; this, too, will fulfill what the prophets had spoken.

5. Servanthood

As Jesus said of himself, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). He knew full well that the only pathway to his final kingship was death, and he was willing. He would not be diverted from the suffering that was his calling. He would do nothing less than give his life so that we would have life. Yes, he is the King, but he rode into Jerusalem to be the Lamb, that is, the final sacrifice for sin, and he did it with joy that was untainted by regret of any kind.

6. Eternity

The focus of the crowd is on the present, while the eyes and heart of the one on the colt are focused on eternity. He could have power now. He could call on angelic armies to preserve his life and to crush his enemies. He could exercise his power for his own escape, but he knows the result would be humanity's eternal doom. With the forces now pressing in on him, he comes with forever in view. He comes to gift the walking dead with life that would never end, and nothing will stop him from completing his mission.

This final ride of humility and triumph, on that borrowed colt, was a ride to the city of his death. Every aspect was done with the generations of souls who would put their trust in him in mind. He rode to his death so that we would reign in life with him forever. He did what he did so that, in a world made new again, we would sing hosanna songs to him forever and ever and ever.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 21:1-11



Day 2

Monday

First Corinthians 15 is one of the most foundational chapters in all of the New Testament; it could be called a “Christianity 101” passage. Paul’s argument in the passage is simple and clear: without eternity, Christianity makes no sense.

If all that sin has broken won’t be fixed forever, then there is no hope now and no hope in the hereafter. Without a guaranteed eternity, our faith in Christ is robbed of its meaning and power: “If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied.” (v.19)

As Christians, we have staked our entire life on the promise of a radical and complete renewal, accomplished by the resurrection of Jesus. That eternal renewal is coming, and in the meantime, there are some specific ways that the resurrection of Christ and the hope of heaven makes a difference in how we live today.

1. The resurrection of Christ and the hope of heaven clarify what is truly important in this life.

Yes, all of our relational, situational, and physical struggles are important in some way, but they must not be viewed as the essence of what life is about. God has not promised to deliver “the good life” of predictable health, an easy marriage, compliant children, and a satisfying job.

The most important thing in life is that we have help with and victory over our biggest and most abiding problem: sin. God promises to work on us; he is with you, in you, and for you. The resurrection guarantees the progressive defeat of sin in the here and now and the final deliverance from it in eternity.

2. The resurrection of Christ and the hope of heaven will radically change the way you approach the responsibilities, difficulties, and opportunities of your daily life.

Eternity takes the vanity out of your living in the here and now. Instead of getting disappointed and discouraged because our efforts aren't bringing us momentary pleasure or because others are not affirming us, eternity gives us big-picture motivation.

We have the motivation to stay focused on doing what is good, right, and true because our living in the here and now fits with the big plan of what God is doing and where he is taking us. In the face of hassles, we tell ourselves that this is not our final destination.

3. The resurrection of Christ and the hope of heaven teach you delayed gratification.

Western culture is an instant culture, but the hope of heaven calls us to a different worldview. In God's plan, waiting is not an interruption or obstruction of the plan; waiting is part of the plan. As we are waiting for the eternity that is the promise of God's grace, we are not just passing the time: waiting is about becoming. Every moment of waiting is a divine tool for personal restoration and preparation.

Isaiah 61:3 beautifully captures this process, "that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified." Oak trees don't sprout up and mature overnight. It takes scores of years to bring a mighty oak to maturity, but when it is mature, it lives with a strength and splendor that few plants in God's creation have.

Through his resurrection, Jesus has purchased for us not only the guarantee of life after death but also the reality of life before death. By grace, may you and I be as strong and as durable through the seasons and storms of life as the mighty oak tree is!



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 15:12-19



Day 3

Tuesday

We are living through a period of time that will be written about in history books. You will tell your grandkids about the time the world shut down due to a pandemic. Documentaries will retell the story of COVID-19 for generations to come.

It's tempting to dwell on the weight of the global pandemic, but I would encourage you to step back. There is a far greater historical moment that you should be thinking about this week. It's the most significant event in the history of the universe: it's the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Everything in the Bible, everything that your faith relies on, and all of your reasons for hope rest on this day. If there is not a specific point in time where Jesus walked out of the tomb, then your religion is a waste of time. The book that we call the Word of God wouldn't be worth the paper that it is written on.

This is the argument the Apostle Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 15: "And if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain [...] And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (vv. 14, 17-19, ESV)

Because of this factual and historical miracle, as believers in Jesus Christ, we get to experience a double resurrection. First, we are resurrected out of our spiritual deadness (Ephesians 2:1), and we become spiritually alive in this life. The Bible describes your life today with a beautiful word - abundant! (John 10:10) Your heart is soft, your mind is alive, and your soul desires obedience to Christ. You have been raised to life so you can experience the beauty and glory of the gospel right here, right now.

There's a second resurrection. It's that final moment when we will be resurrected out of this horrible, broken, and groaning world to live forever in a world of righteousness and peace and harmony. There will be no virus, no suffering, no death, and no sin. We will live with our Savior forever and ever. If Jesus did not rise, there is no double resurrection for us.

Turn back to 1 Corinthians 15. I love how the passage continues: "Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (vv. 24-26)

What does this mean? Jesus is now reigning between the "already" of the first resurrection

and the “not yet” of the second resurrection. In confusing and unpredictable moments like we’re now living through, you don’t have to wonder what your Lord is doing. He is reigning as King, putting all of his enemies under his feet. That final enemy will be death, and when death is under his feet, he will say to the Father, “All things are now ready.”

This week, may your heart be filled with the hope and joy knowing that Jesus did, at a certain point in time in history, walk out of that tomb victorious over death. Because he did, you have life now and life forever. That victory over death guarantees your victory today over sin and secures the ultimate triumph in the end. Christ today reigns on your behalf, defeating enemies you could not overcome.



Scripture Reading

1 Corinthians 15:20-28



Day 4

Wednesday

The Bible doesn't pull any punches as it describes the scary reality of sin. You have the powerful words of Genesis 6:5: "The LORD saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time" (NIV). Every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time! Could there be a more forceful way of characterizing the pervasive influence of sin on everything we do?

Or you have Paul building his case for the sinfulness of everyone, which reaches this crescendo: "All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:12).

Along with this, the Bible very clearly unpacks the underlying spiritual dynamics of sin. Passages like Luke 6:43-45 and Mark 7:20-23 teach us that sin is first a matter of the heart before it is ever a matter of behavior. Romans 1:25 alerts us to the fact that sin, in its essence, is idolatrous. It is when God is replaced as the ruler of our hearts that we give ourselves to doing what pleases us rather than what pleases him.

Psalm 51 is also one of the definitional passages when it comes to sin. David employs three words for sin that really define the nature of what our struggle with it is all about. The first definitional

word he uses is the word **transgression**. To transgress means to acknowledge the boundaries and to step willingly over them. I transgress when I knowingly park in a no-parking zone. I know I'm not supposed to park there, but for the sake of personal convenience, I do so anyway. Often our sin is just like this. We know that God has forbidden what we're about to do, but for personal success, comfort, or pleasure we step over God's prohibition and do exactly what we want to do. When we transgress, we not only rebel against God's authority, but we convince ourselves that we're a better authority with a better system of law than the one God gave us. Propelled by the laws of personal wants, personal feelings, and personal need, we consciously step over God's boundaries and do what we want to do.

"But not all of our sin is conscious, high-handed rebellion. So David uses a second word, **iniquity**. Iniquity is best described as moral uncleanness. This word points to the comprehensive nature of the effect of sin on us. Sin is a moral infection that stains everything we desire, think, speak, and do. Sadly, no infant since the fall of the world into sin has been born morally clean. We all entered this world dirty and there's nothing we can do to clean ourselves up. Iniquity is like inadvertently putting a pair of bright red socks into the wash with a load of whites. There'll be nothing that

escapes the red stain and remains completely white. In the same way, sin is pervasive. It really does alter everything we do in some way.

“But there’s a third word that David uses that gets at another aspect of sin’s damage. It’s the word **sin**. Sin is best defined as falling short of a standard. In our moments of best intention and best effort we still fall short. We’re simply unable to reach the level of the standards that God has set for us. Sin has simply removed our ability to keep God’s law. So, we fall short of his standard again and again and again. In your thoughts you fall short. In your desires you fall short. In your marriage or family you fall short. In your communication you fall short. At your job you fall short. With your friends you fall short. We simply are not able to meet God’s requirements.

“This “terrible trinity” of words for sin really does capture with power and clarity the nature of the war that rages inside each one of us. Sometimes I do not do exactly what God requires, but I don’t care because I want what I want, and so I step over his wise boundaries. Sometimes I look back

on what I’ve done, having thought that I’d done pretty well, only to see ways in which my words and behavior were once more stained with sin. And over and over again I’m confronted with my weakness and inability. I fall short of God’s standard even in moments of good intention.

“How can this terrible trinity do anything other than drive us to seek the grace that can only be found in the divine Trinity? In our sin we need a Father who’s not satisfied with leaving us in this sad state of affairs but will exercise his sovereign power to set a plan in place that will rescue us from us. In our sin we need a Son who is willing to take our punishment so that we can be forgiven. And in our sin, we need a Spirit who will dwell within us, empowering us to do what we would not otherwise be able to do.

We haven’t been left to the ravages of the terrible trinity, because we’ve been rescued by the love of a better Trinity. Thank you, Sovereign Father, for your gracious plan. Thank you, Sacrificial Son, for standing in our place. Thank you, Holy Spirit, for your empowering presence. In you, triune Lord, we really do find help and hope.



Scripture Reading

Psalms 51



Day 5

Maundy Thursday

If there had been no upper room, if there had been no fulfillment of the promises of the Passover, and if Jesus were not the final Passover Lamb, we would simply have no hope in this life or the one to come. It is impossible to overstate the importance of Jesus saying these profound words: “This is my body, which is given for you” and “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” Here is Jesus, in that intimate final night with his disciples, saying, “I am the hope of fallen humanity, because I am the promised, spotless Lamb of God.

Just as the blood painted on the Israelites’ doors in Egypt meant that the angel of death would pass over those houses, so all who put their trust in the Messiah Jesus are covered by his blood and therefore will not bear the punishment for their own sin.

It’s not enough that Jesus was a great teacher. If all he had done were teach truth, but had not shed his blood as the fulfillment of all the truth teaches us about sin and redemption, then we would be damned. If all Jesus had done were

perform physical healings, then we would still be the spiritual walking dead. If all he had done were confront the false religion of the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, but had not gone on to be the sacrificial Lamb that true religion requires, then we would be doomed. If all he had done were send his disciples out with a theological message, but had not been the historical, physical covering, by his shed blood, which that theological message requires, then we would be without hope and without God, sinners alone in this fallen world.

But he is the Passover Lamb. He is the fulfillment of the covenant promises of old. His blood covers and cleanses us. All human history marched to this moment in the upper room and the sacrifice of Jesus’s life that would follow.

Whenever I read the account of the incredible moment in that rented room and hear Jesus talk of his blood that was about to be poured out, a hymn always comes to mind. Its words are near and dear to my heart. It was written in 1876 by Robert Lowry, who was a pastor in Philadelphia, the city where I live.

“Nothing but the Blood of Jesus”

What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.
What can make me whole again?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

Refrain:

Oh, precious is the flow
that makes me white as snow;
no other fount I know,
nothing but the blood of Jesus.

For my cleansing, this I see—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
For my pardon this my plea—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Nothing can for sin atone—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
“Naught of good that I have done—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!

This is all my hope and peace—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
This is all my righteousness—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Now by this I’ll overcome—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
Now by this I’ll reach my home—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Glory! Glory! This I sing—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!
All my praise for this I bring—
nothing but the blood of Jesus!

May you attach your sense of self, your meaning and purpose, your moral compass, and your hopes and dreams to the message delivered in that upper room and to the actual moment of sacrifice on that hill outside the city. And may every moment of sin, weakness, and failure be punctuated by you singing to yourself the ultimate answer to the ultimate question, What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.



Scripture Reading

Matthew 26:17-30



Day 6

Good Friday

At the center of a biblical worldview is this radical recognition—the most horrible thing that ever happened was the most wonderful thing that ever happened. Consider the cross of Jesus Christ. Could it be possible for something to happen that was more terrible than this? Could any injustice be greater? Could any loss be more painful? Could any suffering be worse? The only man who ever lived a life that was perfect in every way possible, who gave his life for the sake of many, and who willingly suffered from birth to death in loyalty to his calling was cruelly and publicly murdered in the most vicious of ways. How could it happen that the Son of Man could die? How could it be that men could capture and torture the Messiah? Was this not the end of everything good, true, and beautiful? If this could happen, is there any hope for the world?

Well, the answer is yes. There is hope! The cross was not the end of the story! In God's righteous and wise plan, this dark and disastrous moment was ordained to be the moment that would fix all the dark and disastrous things that sin had done to the world. This moment of death was at the same time a moment of life. This hopeless moment was the moment when eternal hope was given. This terrible moment of injustice was at the very same time a moment of amazing grace. This moment of extreme suffering guaranteed that suffering would end one day, once and for all.

This moment of sadness welcomed us to eternal joy of heart and life. The capture and death of Christ purchased for us life and freedom. The very worst thing that could happen was at the very same time the very best thing that could happen. Only God is able to do such a thing.

The same God who planned that the worst thing would be the best thing is your Father. He rules over every moment in your life, and in powerful grace he is able to do for you just what he did in redemptive history. He takes the disasters in your life and makes them tools of redemption. He takes your failure and employs it as a tool of grace. He uses the "death" of the fallen world to motivate you to reach out for life. The hardest things in your life become the sweetest tools of grace in his wise and loving hands.

So be careful how you make sense of your life. What looks like a disaster may in fact be grace. What looks like the end may be the beginning. What looks hopeless may be God's instrument to give you real and lasting hope. Your Father is committed to taking what seems so bad and turning it into something that is very, very good.



Scripture Reading

Acts 2:14-36



Day 7

Holy Saturday

Saturday
a beaten
abused
broken
man lay dead
sealed away
borrowed tomb.
Saturday
life died
hope died
love died
redemption's promise died
the future died
all sealed in that
tomb.
Saturday
we died
dead in sin
no hope of life.
Saturday

darkness lived
mourning reigned
earth groaned.
Saturday
was not the end
Sunday came.
That man
Son of Man
Son of God
Lamb of Sacrifice
Conquering King
rose.
Love rose
hope rose
redemption rose
victory rose.
That Sunday
death got a death sentence
life now and forever.

I love Easter Sunday. I love the celebratory music we sing at church. I love the passages of Scripture we read during worship. Most of all, I love the visual image of the Empty Tomb. In one culminating and specific moment in history, Jesus Christ summarizes and finalizes the salvation narrative.

There are six things in particular that I love about the Empty Tomb.

1. The Empty Tomb reveals that God is faithful.

Centuries earlier, after Adam and Eve rebelled, God promised that he would crush wrong once and for all (Genesis 3:15). He vowed to send his Son to defeat sin and death by his crucifixion and resurrection. For thousands of years, God neither forgot nor turned from his promise. He didn't grow weary, nor would he be distracted. He made a promise, and he controlled the events of history so that at just the right moment, Jesus Christ would come and fulfill what had been promised.

2. The Empty Tomb reveals that God is powerful.

Think of the authority you need to have to control all the situations, locations, and relationships to guarantee that Jesus would come at the precise moment and do what he was appointed to do. Also, could there be a more pointed demonstration of authority than to have power over death (1 Corinthians 15:55)? By God's awesome power, Jesus took off his grave clothes and walked out of that tomb. Human beings are capable of some pretty amazing things, but we'll all die, and there's nothing we can do about it.

3. The Empty Tomb reveals that God is loving.

Why would God go to such an extent to help us? Why would he care to notice us, let alone rescue us? Why would he ever sacrifice his own Son? Not only is God loving - he is the definition of love (John 3:16, 1 John 4:8). You and I need to recognize that his love was not motivated by what he saw in us, but by what is inside him. Even when we're unloving and rebellious, full of ourselves and wanting our own way, God is still loving. He delights in transforming us by his grace and rescuing us by his love.

4. The Empty Tomb guarantees eternity.

No matter how mundane, routine, and slowly progressing your story seems to be, it's marching towards a glorious conclusion. There will be a moment when God raises you out of this broken world into a paradise where sin and suffering will be no more (1 Corinthians 15:52, Revelation 21:4).

5. The Empty Tomb guarantees security.

No matter how unpredictable and out-of-control your life feels, Jesus is reigning, and he will continue to reign until the final enemy is under his feet (1 Corinthians 15:25). That doesn't mean you won't experience pain and hurt in this world, but it does mean there's nothing Jesus does not know about, cannot rescue you from, or redeem and transform.

6. The Empty Tomb guarantees delivery.

No matter how hopeless and weak you think you are, you've been provided with all the grace you need to make it to the end. Future grace always carries with it the promise of present grace. God will provide everything you need until you see him face to face (2 Peter 1:3).

That's why I love Easter Sunday so much!



Scripture Reading

Mark 15



Day 8

Easter Sunday

I hope that your church pulls out all the stops for a raucous celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Without this historic event and the promise it gives us, “we are of all people most to be pitied” (1 Corinthians 15:19). We should absolutely make Easter Sunday the biggest and best date on the calendar!

But what will you do with Easter once Easter Sunday is over? What will you do with Easter when a particular area of sin looks attractive to you, and you feel weak and unable? What will you do with Easter when someone has betrayed you and thoughts of vengeance enter your head? What will you do with Easter when you’re struggling in your marriage, and it seems impossible to love one another as God has designed? What will you do with Easter when you’re facing another situation with a rebellious child, and you feel as if there’s no patience left? What will you do with Easter when you lay in bed tonight, wondering how you’ll face tomorrow?

What will you do with Easter once Easter Sunday is over?

As much as I’m captivated and riveted by the reality of the Empty Tomb on Easter Sunday, I need to be honest with you: it’s a struggle for me to remember it once the celebration of Easter has died down. This is where 1 Corinthians 15:58 is so helpful for me:

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”

(1 Corinthians 15 is arguably the New Testament’s longest and most detailed treatise on the Resurrection. In the final verse, the Apostle Paul gives us marching orders for how to live because of Easter.)

There are three things the Empty Tomb does for us every day of the year:

1. The Empty Tomb comforts us.

Difficult and unpredictable realities of life in a fallen world are guaranteed, but we can “be steadfast and immovable” even when we don’t understand, because our Risen Savior rules over everything that would confuse us.

2. The Empty Tomb motivates us.

If Christ rose from death, reigns in power, and is coming back again, we should be the most motivated community on earth, “always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Enough of mere survival - we should help others thrive right here, right now, because we believe in victory, redemption, and transformation.

3. The Empty Tomb assures us.

If the Resurrection guarantees eternity, then we believe that our suffering and ministry “is not in vain.” Life will get discouraging - at times, it won’t seem that there is an end in sight or progress is invisible. But a Second Coming is coming, and we will be rewarded for our faith.

Don’t wait until next Easter to celebrate these realities again. They are yours today in Christ!



Scripture Reading

John 20:1-29