



A Devotional Guide Through the Holy Week.

10 DAYS WITH JESUS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Day 1: Friday, April 3	1
Day 2: Saturday, April 4	7
Day 3: Sunday, April 5	13
Day 4: Monday, April 6	19
Day 5: Tuesday, April 7	25
Day 6: Wednesday, April 8	31
Day 7: Thursday, April 9	41
Day 8: Friday, April 10	49
Day 9: Saturday, April 11	55
Day 10: Easter Sunday, April 12	63

DAY

1

Friday - April 3

What would you do if you only had 10 days to live?

What would you say?

Where would you go?

Who would you invite over for dinner?

10 Days with Jesus is an online experience that will immerse you into the final days of Jesus the Messiah. We'll go where he goes, see what he sees, and hear what he says. We'll investigate His outlandish claims and witness the supernatural events that surrounded what we often call - Passion Week.

Imagine spending 10 Days with Jesus - The one who taught the masses, turned the water into wine, healed the sick, raised the dead, and claimed to be God! I mean, really . . . who claims to be God? One thing is for sure - if you spent 10 Days with Jesus, you'd never be the same again! Whatcha' think? Are you ready to go on a 10-day journey?

The Backside of Nowhere.

The story of Easter starts in the wilderness. The Jewish leaders had finally had enough of the Jesus craze and had issued a death wish on Jesus and his followers. Meanwhile, the crowds started showing up in droves to get in on the action.

Apparently raising Lazarus from the dead had put Jesus into some serious hot water. The religious leaders were cool with the “water-to-wine thing”, and to help us feed the masses program, and to fix our health care dilemma - but raising a man from the dead was over the top. It was too much. It was . . . well . . . it was something they’d never seen before. Something different.

So, in preparation for his final assignment as the Savior of the World, Jesus and the twelve disciples headed into the desert to catch a breath. I’m not sure about you, but this is the point of the story where I would exit stage right. See ya!

But not Jesus. He was on a mission.

It’s GO Time.

The Passover was just around the corner, and Jesus had a job to do. An assignment that began in the Garden of Eden when Adam told God - NO.

God had given Adam one rule to establish himself as the ruler. Outside of that one rule, Adam was free to enjoy everything! But that one rule came with a warning, “if you disobey my rule . . . the penalty will be death” (Genesis 2). That seems like a pretty harsh punishment to me, but ultimately God was saying to Adam . . .

“I AM YOUR LIFE. Anything other than me is DEATH.”

You guessed it. Right after God gave Adam these instructions, Adam chose to tell God NO and ignore his command. Within minutes of that one decision, Adam and his wife Eve were hiding in the bushes and blaming each other. Death had now entered the story. But God refused to let the story end with death as the victor. Right there in front of God and everybody - God made a promise!

God promised that he would cover the payment that sin required. More specifically, that his son Jesus would BE the payment that sin required. It was time to GO. The world had waited long enough.

The Messiah was on the move with his twelve disciples and a crowd in tow. They were dustily making their way from the wilderness to the Passover city of Jerusalem. Passover was the annual celebration that helped the Jewish nation look forward to their coming Messiah. They would sacrifice a ceremonial lamb while they waited for “The Lamb of God” to finally arrive.

The Messiah seemed long overdue and they had grown weary of waiting. They were tired of paying for their sins with the all-too-frequent trips to the Temple. The rituals of confession and sacrifices had taken their toll. The whole world was waiting for the Messiah to come - and he was on his way!

Let’s Have a Talk.

Shortly before they reached the city, Jesus stopped short. He needed to prep his disciples for what was about to happen. No matter how many times he had tried to tell them, they just didn’t get it. They didn’t truly understand his mission of redemption. So . . . like any good teacher, he pulled them away from the crowd and had a true “come to Jesus talk.”

“Listen, we’re going up to Jerusalem, where the Son of Man (Jesus) will be betrayed to the leading priests and the teachers of religious law. They will sentence me to die. Then they will hand me over to the Romans to be mocked, flogged with a whip, and crucified. But on the third day, I will be raised from the dead.” ~ Mark 10:33-34

Talk about a bombshell. The disciples thought they were on their way to a huge party, but Jesus was prepping them for a crucifixion. They were looking for a

King to set them free and this plan didn't seem very kingly. Two of the disciples, James and John, had heard enough . . .

“Hey Jesus, thanks for sharing all that intimate stuff about persecution, crucifixion, and resurrection - but we've got a super important question for you! When you finally get your Kingdom all setup, can we sit on either side of your throne? That'd be really cool. Can we? Can we? Can we?”
~ Mark 10:35-37 (Paraphrased).

Talk about missing the point. Jesus had lived his entire life for the sole purpose of GIVING, but his disciples were only interested in GETTING.

Let's Try Again.

Jesus knew that the only way his followers would truly understand serving was to see it in action. The events of the next 10 Days with Jesus would re-frame their entire view of serving. Giving themselves away would take on a whole new meaning.

Jesus said it this way . . .

“Whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man (Jesus) came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.” ~ Mark 10:44-45

But here's the twist. We're quick to jump on the bandwagon of Jesus giving his life away for us . . . but the primary point of the whole story was that Jesus was asking his disciples to do the very same thing for others.

10 Days from now it would be their turn to serve.

How About You?

- Are you following Jesus for what he can give you?
- Are you more interested in the blessings of Jesus than the mission of Jesus?
- Who can you serve today by giving them your time, your resources, your affection . . . YOURSELF?

Saturday - April 4

Jesus was on the way to the biggest job he had ever tackled - the job of “Saving the World.” The whole world was waiting for the Messiah to come - and he was on his way! But not quite yet . . .

On his way to Save the WORLD - Jesus stopped to save the ONE.

On the Road Again.

Jesus and the disciples were on their way to celebrate the Passover in Jerusalem, yet His closest followers still didn’t see that they were walking with “The Lamb of God.” The promise of God was right next to them and they still didn’t see it.

Sound familiar? Haven’t we all floundered in our mess while we ignore the Savior whose right in front of us? Maybe God has been present all along, but we’ve refused to see him. The truth is that God came to give us sight!

The processional continued to make its way

from the wilderness . . .

through Jericho . . .

and on to Jerusalem.

Jesus was minutes away from opening their eyes and then he stopped.

Just outside of town, when the caravan was just gaining momentum, the voice of a blind beggar rose above the noise of the crowd . . .

“Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.” ~ Mark 10:47.

“Be quiet!” was the instant reply of the in-crowd. They didn’t say it out loud, but we all know what the “Be quiet” rebuke really meant . . . “Are you kidding me? You’re the last person in the world who belongs in our party. You’re an outsider. A beggar. A problem that we wish would go away!” ~ Mark 10:48 (paraphrased)

The crowd saw him as a PROBLEM - but Jesus saw him as a PERSON.

Mark 10:49 says, “when Jesus heard him, he stopped and said, ‘tell him to come here.’” Jesus stopped. Really Jesus? We’re on a mission. We’re just gaining momentum. Our crowd is growing. Your approval ratings are off the charts.

Jesus stopped.

The truth of those two words hits us square in the face. We rarely stop. We’re busy. We’re movers and shakers. We’re type A (or some of us AAA)! We don’t need to stop and notice the ONE - we’re on our way to reach the MASSES.

But not Jesus . . .

On his way to Save the WORLD - Jesus stopped to save the ONE.

The Million \$ Question.

“Tell him to come here,” was the answer Jesus gave to the man - his answer to the problem. By the way, he’s still answering our problems with the same 5 words, “tell him to come here.” Jesus sees something that we often overlook . . .

Healing begins when we COME TO JESUS.

We're never too bad to come back. Never too far gone. Never too messed up. Never too dirty. Jesus says . . . *"Come Here."*

So the blind man, named Bartimaeus, abandoned his stuff and shuffled his way towards the voice that said *"come."* There he was - in all his messiness - standing in front of the holy Son of God. What an encounter!

It's the ultimate showdown between the perfect God and the problem child. What would Jesus do now? Rebuke him for the sin that caused his blindness? Give him a lecture about having more faith? Tell him to clean up his stuff and meet me at church this Sunday? Nope.

Jesus asked him a simple question (Mark 10:51) . . .

"What do you want me to do for you?"

Well . . . let's see . . . for starters . . . "I CAN'T SEE!" (that's how I would respond) But the blind beggar that so desperately wanted healing said . . . "My Rabbi, I want to see!" He called him My Rabbi. My teacher. My rescuer. My healer. The irony is that the one person in the story who couldn't see at all was the only person in the story that could actually see Jesus for who He really was.

The blind beggar saw Jesus as HIS rabbi. Do I see Jesus that way?

Is Jesus MY teacher? MY savior?

Is he truly the Messiah that sees ME?

Knows ME? Loves ME?

Just like I am - ME?

Jesus was showing his disciples that he loves the individual persons of the world. That the individual person matters in the Kingdom of God. That YOU matter.

Watch This.

A blind man was about to get his sight. Imagine opening your eyes for the first time ever, and seeing the Savior of the world standing right in front of you. Not a bad way to begin your first day of sight!

Jesus said to Bartimaeus . . .

“Go, for your faith has healed you.”

Mark’s gospel tells us that, “instantly the man could see, and he followed Jesus on the way,” (10:52) Instantly. Just like that . . . years of blindness, rejection, shame, and humiliation were gone. The greek word “sozo” that was translated “healed” in the passage above, is the same word for “Salvation.” The most literal explanation of that verse would say . . .

“Go, for your faith has SAVED you.”

My friend. Jesus is standing right in front of YOU today and is asking YOU the very same question . . . “What do you want me to do for YOU?”

And just like the blind beggar, Jesus can open YOUR eyes in an instant. He can, does, and will remove the years that have plagued you. Years of wondering . . . if you’ll ever be good enough, if you’ll ever overcome this addiction, if she’ll ever come back to you, if God even sees you?

Jesus has come to save you!

Do you see him?

How About You?

- Do you feel like God has overlooked you?
- Do you see people around you like Jesus sees them?
- Ask God to open your eyes today!

DAY

3

Palm Sunday - April 5

A donkey. Not a horse? A donkey!

Why would the King of the Jews ride a donkey to the biggest Jewish festival of the entire year? “Come on Jesus - this is your big day. Your chance to make your grand entrance. Your BIG ANNOUNCEMENT. It’s your Kingdom and it’s time to be the King.” But Jesus was a different kind of a King - he was the King of Peace.

*Jesus wasn’t the King they EXPECTED -
but he was the exact King they NEEDED.*

518 Years Earlier.

In 518 BC, the prophet Zechariah wrote these words about Jesus, “Look, your King is coming to you. He is humble, riding on a donkey - riding on a donkey’s colt.” ~ Zechariah 9:9. The prophet Isaiah wrote in 740 BC, “Unto us a child is born. Unto us a Son is given. And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end.” ~ Isaiah 9:6-7.

Right in the middle of the Roman oppression -
Jesus showed up as the Prince of Peace.

The Jewish people had waited for a King to deliver them from Rome, but Jesus the King came for a much bigger purpose than that - he came to deliver them from sin.

The LORD's Meal.

The Passover that Jesus had come to celebrate was rooted in the ancient story of The 10 Plagues. Yep - it was all part of the deliverance story of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery. God had appointed Moses to prepare his people for deliverance. After 400 years of making bricks for Pharaoh, the Jehovah God was going to deliver them overnight.

The Passover was a celebration that God would DELIVER his people.

The night before God's deliverance, the Jewish people were to sacrifice a lamb to Jehovah God, eat the meat to celebrate their coming deliverance, and use the blood to paint their doorposts as a sign of their belief. God told his people in Exodus 12:13, "When I see the blood, I will pass over you." According to the Exodus story of deliverance, The Angel of the LORD would sweep through Egypt and bring judgment to any household that had not followed the command. He would "pass over" any household that displayed the sacrificial blood of the lamb.

The Angel of the LORD would PASS OVER all who believed.

That Passover night in ancient Egypt would change the relationship between God and his people forever. From here on out, they would celebrate the annual deliverance of the LORD by celebrating the Passover feast.

Free for ALL.

The irony of that historic night in Egypt was that although deliverance was available for ALL - not all believed. The same offer is still true today . . .

Salvation is available for ALL - but not all will BELIEVE.

It's my prayer dear friend, that as you read these words from Jesus you'll receive them as true . . . "I tell you the truth, those who listen to my message and believe in God who sent me will have eternal life. They will never be condemned for their sins, but they have already passed from death into life." ~ John 5:24.

Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3:16 . . .

"God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son (Jesus), so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life."

Palm Sunday.

Back to the story of Jesus and the donkey . . . this Passover would be different than any other. This would be the FINAL Passover because Jesus was finally here. John the Baptist called Jesus "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." ~ John 1:29

Jesus was the Messiah that came to be the FINAL Passover Lamb.

Jesus entered the city of Jerusalem in the center of a great processional throng. He was fulfilling a 518 year-old prophecy by entering on a donkey. He was fulfilling a 700 year-old prophecy by entering as the King of the Jews. He rode a donkey - not a war horse! He came with healing - not judgment. He came to serve others - instead of making them serve him. Jesus was the King of Peace.

*Jesus wasn't the King they EXPECTED -
but he was the exact King they NEEDED.*

As he entered the city of Jerusalem, the crowds were waving palm branches and singing . . . "Hosanna for the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name

of the LORD! Praise God in the highest heaven!” ~ Matthew 21:9 Palm Branches were the symbol of victory by the Greek goddess Nike, but the Jewish people had been waving them every year since the first Passover in Leviticus 23.

Little did the crowd know that this particular Sunday would be different. This would be the Sunday that marked the Messiah’s final week on earth. This would be the Sunday that preceded THE SUNDAY of all Sunday’s. Easter was on its way.

Jerusalem . . . we have a problem!

Not everyone was excited to see Jesus. As with any crowd, the responses to his entrance were all over the map. Mostly they disagreed with his claims to be the Messiah - the Son of God. Let’s be honest . . . If I met a teacher at Barton Springs this week that claimed to be the Son of God, I’d be a little skeptical too! *(especially if you’ve seen the people who hang out at Barton Springs).*

Not everyone agreed with the King of Peace. Not everyone was ready for the Kingdom of God. A closer look at the Triumphant Entry (another name for Palm Sunday) reveals four groups of people on the crowded road to Jerusalem.

Which one are you?

The Believing: This is the only group that got it right. They were the only ones to truly see that God was the Messiah, the Son of God, the King of the Jews. This was the group that cried “Hosanna!” - which means Save Us Now.

The Confused: The disciples were part of this group. Even after 3 years of being with Jesus every day, they still didn’t understand his mission. They were confused by his actions and wanted him to start acting more like a real King.

The Furious: The most vocal of all was the group of Pharisees that rebuked Jesus for allowing the crowd to worship him. In their eyes, Jehovah God was the only one worthy of worship - and Jesus was NOT from God.

The Curious: The largest group of all asked . . . “Who is this?” Some were in town to celebrate a tradition. Some were coming to join the hype. Some were there to peddle to tourists. But ALL of them were asking . . . “Who is this?”

*The story of Passover wasn't about the crowds -
it was about the ONE.*

Each ONE of us is in the Passover story.

Each ONE of us must decide who Jesus is.

Each ONE of us is invited to worship the King of Peace.

How About You?

- Are you the **believing one** who accepts Jesus as your Savior and King?
- Are you the **confused one** who is near the King but doesn't know the King?
- Are you the **furious one** who tells Jesus how to behave?
- Are you the **curious one** who is searching for a King to bring you Peace?

DAY

4

Monday - April 6

When was the last time you cried?

I don't mean a misty-eyed-could-have-been-the-pollen cried but - CRIED. The kind of tears that make your eyes burn and your heart heavy. The kind you can't hold back even if you wanted to. How long has it been since you cried like that? Maybe it's been awhile. Maybe it was last night. Either way, you're not alone -

Jesus wept too.

Early on that Monday morning . . . "as Jesus came near the city of Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it." ~ Luke 19:41

Jesus cried because his children were LOST. If you're a parent you know why Jesus cried - his children were in trouble. Jesus had come to earth for the sole purpose of rescuing his children back to their Father, but they had refused to recognize him as their Messiah. Jesus came to bring hope to the hopeless, sight to the blind, and life to the dead. And as of right now - his children were hopeless, blind, and spiritually dead.

Have you ever prayed over your sleeping child? Wept over the deceit they had believed? Cried out for God to get their attention and change their direction? Have you ever stood in the front yard, looked into the heavens, and cried -

OH MY GOD!!!

Jesus did and I have too. I'm assuming you've been there too. And it hurts. It hurts to watch those you love the most, hurt the most. It pangs you to know there is a solution and watch them blow off their own salvation. It hurt Jesus too. It moved him to tears to look at the city that was called to be the epicenter of worship to his Father and had instead become a haven of self-righteousness.

But there she sat in all her spiritual pride, her festivities, and her blindness. The city of Jerusalem was filled with religion, but was empty of salvation. The people were separated from their creator, their God, and their Father. So the Son cried.

What about Your City?

When was the last time you cried over your city? Your community? Your family? When was the last time you put aside progress to notice a person? Tabled your agenda to sit at the table? When was the last time you went out of your way to help others find their way?

*When was the last time you wept
over the things that make God weep?*

Austin, Texas is my home! I'm originally from Georgia but it didn't take long to abandon my roots and act like I've been here all my life, (I even bought cowboy boots - but I refuse to trade in the baseball cap). What's not to love about Austin - it's the live music capital of the world, home to an incredible food scene, and minutes away from the Texas Hill Country. But here's the truth about our city . . .

Our city is LOST.

Over 1 million people in Austin TX have no personal relationship with Jesus Christ! Right in the middle of incredible culture, brilliant scholars, and budding entrepreneurs - are the same people Jesus wept over on that Monday morning.

What about your city? Have you closed your eyes to the lostness of your city? Have you settled into a rhythm and don't even notice? Do you see your city the way Jesus sees your city? Do you see your co-workers the way Jesus sees them? Your Family? Your Self? Here's the truth about your city . . .

Everyone is looking for ANSWERS and Jesus is the ONLY solution.

Jesus said it this way in John 12:35-36, "those who walk in the darkness cannot see where they are going. Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light."

The Kingdom is NEAR.

Here's where it gets a bit harder. We can't just stand on the outside and wish things were different. Gathering into a holy huddle on Sunday and praying for the lost will never be enough. God's children are lost and he sent us to find them. If we really want to bring light to our city . . . we have to actually enter the city. We have to roll up our sleeves and get dirty. We have to serve others. We have to ask questions. We have to be uncomfortable. We have to GO NEAR.

Jesus modeled what NEAR looked like when he came as a baby. It wasn't enough for him to look down from the high perch of heaven and wish things were different. It wasn't enough for him to pray for our rescue. There was only one thing he could do to make a difference.

Jesus came NEAR.

John 1:14 says it this way . . . "The Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us." He went on to say in vs. 18, that Jesus came "to reveal God to us." The mission of Jesus was to bring salvation to the lost. It's our mission too.

It's HIS Church.

But there was a reason the city was so lost. It had been led astray by religious leaders and teachers. The very group that was supposed to prepare the way for God's coming was the group that was blocking the way to the Kingdom. Jesus told the Pharisees in Matthew 23:13 . . . "You shut the door to the Kingdom of Heaven in peoples faces." (BTW - that speech got pretty brutal by the time Jesus was done chewing them out). Here's why it got ugly . . .

Jesus wasn't OK with his children being LOST.

The Pharisees had become their own Gods. They were the professional do-gooders of the day. They were the charter members of the "We're Better Than Anyone Else" club. Religion had officially trumped a relationship with God, and they were the boss when it came to religion.

But Jesus was about to show them who was boss . . .

"Jesus entered the Temple and began to drive out the people buying and selling animals for sacrifices. He knocked over the tables of the money changers and the chairs of those selling doves, and he stopped everyone from using the Temple as a marketplace. He said to them, 'The Scriptures declare, 'My Temple will be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7), but you have turned it into a Den of Thieves.' (Jeremiah 7:11)" ~ Mark 11:15-17

The Temple had become a place of business instead of a place of worship, and Jesus was furious. Nothing angered Jesus more than to see religious rules trump a personal relationship. His harshest words and actions weren't towards those who knew they were sinners . . . they were directed towards those who thought they were righteous. And here's why - Jesus knew that they were all sinners, and that "no one could come to the Father except through HIM." ~ John 14:6

As a 48 year-old preacher's son, I've seen this dilemma far too often. We're tempted to build and attend churches that entertain us, cater to us, fill us, and make us happy, but . . .

The Church isn't about US - the Church is about JESUS.

It's his church and he wants it full of those that are lost. My friends - it's time to open the doors and welcome everyone into the "house of prayer for ALL PEOPLE." Jesus said in Matthew 22:9 . . . "Go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.' So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests."

It's HIS church and he wants it full of those that are LOST.

Clean Your Temple.

There's one final word hidden in the passage for today - The Church isn't a group of nameless people, it's a gathering of individuals. So before we get all high-and-mighty on how the Church has become high-and-mighty . . . let's remember that it's your primary duty to let God cleanse you first.

Peter said in 1 Peter 4:17 . . . "Judgment must begin with God's household - it begins with us." The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:19 that . . . "Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit."

So . . . how's your Temple?

Is it full of things that are bossing you around?

Is Jesus on the throne of your life?

Maybe it's time to stop blaming the CHURCH
and start cleaning your OWN Temple.

How About You?

- Do you see your city as Lost?
- Do you weep with compassion over those who are apart from God?
- Have you been attending the Church or being the Church?
- What needs cleansing in your Temple?

Tuesday - April 7

Jesus was walking into the Temple for the very last time. This was his home. His heritage. The place where he grew up as a boy. The sights, sounds, and smells of Temple worship were all too familiar to this old-school Jewish boy. He was dedicated there as an eight day-old baby, and studied there as a 12 year-old boy. This was his Father's house . . . so this was his house.

But this Temple visit would be different than all the others. This would be his last. His last sermon was about to be delivered and he had ONE MAIN POINT. Jesus said . . . I AM the main point, and you've ALL missed the point!

The Last Sermon.

You could hear a pin drop on that early Tuesday morning as Jesus took his place at the Temple. Something felt different about today's message. Something seemed heavier than usual. The Savior - The Messiah- The Greatest Teacher of all time . . . was teaching for the very last time. Jesus knew this would be his last time to speak the TRUTH.

What would you have said if you were Jesus? If this were your last message? Would you do a quick recap of the 10 commandments? Would you cancel church for the day and host a huge picnic (where you fed everyone)? Would you tell an inspiring story that would finally melt their hearts to tears? What would you have said if you were Jesus? Here's what Jesus said when it was finally his turn to speak . . .

You've got it ALL WRONG!

Yep - that's basically what he said over the next several pages of scripture. He started in his usual style of telling parables, but it wasn't very long until the parables turned personal. Jesus told the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29 . . .

"Your mistake is that you don't know the Scriptures,
and you don't know the power of God."

"Don't know the Scriptures!?!?! Is he insane??? We've spent our whole life memorizing the Scriptures word-for-word. We're professional do-gooders. If anybody is GOOD - it's us. We're ALL GOOD, Jesus!"

Hold On. He's Not Done.

The lesson was getting heated and he was only just getting started. Jesus pointed directly at the Pharisees (the religious elite) and said to the crowd . . .
"Don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they preach. They crush people with unbearable religious demands, and never lift a finger to ease the burden. Everything they do is for show." ~ Matthew 23:3-4 This was his last sermon and he wasn't going to leave anything unsaid.

*Jesus was only three days away from his crucifixion,
and he LOVED them enough to tell them the TRUTH.*

Jesus continued with seven more warnings
to the religious elite in Matthew 23 . . .

"You shut the door of the Kingdom of Heaven in people's faces." (v.13)

"You swear on the name of the Temple
but you ignore the God of the Temple." (v.20)

"You tithe on your herb garden but you
ignore showing Justice, Mercy, and Faith." (v.23)

"You strain your water so you don't swallow a gnat
but instead you swallow a camel." (v.24)

"You're so careful to clean the outside of the cup
but inside you're filthy - full of greed and self-indulgence." (v. 25)

"You're like white-washed tombs that look beautiful
on the outside but are full of dead bones on the inside." (v.27)

You guys are Snakes. You're a Den of Vipers.
How will you ever escape the judgment of Hell?

WOW . . . anyone ready for intermission?

Why would Jesus spend his last sermon
telling everybody how WRONG they were?

Seriously . . . do we really need another sermon on our "wrongness"?
I thought Jesus loved people? I thought he came to bring peace, and hope,
and love? I thought he was the ultimate motivational teacher?
Why would he spend his last message on this earth reminding
everyone how wrong they were? Because of Love.

Jesus loved them enough to tell them the TRUTH.

Love Tells the TRUTH.

Think about it. How loving would it be for the Messiah to stand in his Temple for the final time and stop short of anything but telling the truth? Anything short of the TRUTH wouldn't be LOVE. And there was one final truth Jesus needed to say: Jesus said . . . "The Scriptures point to ME. Yet you refuse to come to me to receive eternal life." (John 5:39)

They knew Scriptures. They knew the in's and out's of The Law of Moses. They knew how to keep their noses clean and their hands to themselves. They knew about God intellectually but they didn't know him personally.

Jesus was surrounded by the religious elite who knew the SCRIPTURES, but didn't know the SAVIOR.

The sad part was that "The Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6) was standing right in front of them. Why couldn't they see that The Truth was near? He was inches away from their hands, but miles away from the hearts! Like many of us, they had built a false kingdom that put themselves at the center. They had believed the oldest lie in the book . . . "You don't need God - you're ALL GOOD." It's the same lie that deceived Adam in the garden, and it's still lying to us today.

Jesus was telling them that their GOOD works would never be GOOD enough.

The Gospel of Good.

The Gospel of Good is a deceiver. It sounds true. It feels right. It seems logical. But it's an uphill battle. If good is the standard then who defines good? If good is the goal, then "How Good is Good Enough?" If good can save us, then why was Jesus so angry at the good guys?

*The problem with the Gospel of Good,
is that the scriptures claim that NONE of us are good!*

Romans 3:23 claims that “ALL of us have come up short of God’s standard.” The problem with the Gospel of Good is that it’s relative - it assumes that God compares our goodness to the goodness of those around us. It assumes that as long as we’re-better-than-they-are then we’re OK. Or as long as my-good-outweighs-my-bad then I’m OK. And while that sounds like a doable scale . . .

God’s scale is PERFECTION.

So if God’s scale is perfection then we’re all in trouble! How can any of us be 100% perfect ALL THE TIME??? We can’t. The message of Jesus was that your good works won’t get you to heaven and your bad works won’t keep you out. The message of Jesus was that salvation was through him alone.

Jesus + Nothing = Salvation

The Gospel of God.

The word Gospel means “Good News” and Jesus is the best news ever. Jesus said, “If you trust in me, you are trusting not only me, but also God who sent me. I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark. The Father who sent me has commanded me what to say and how to say it. And I know his commands lead to eternal life.”

~ John 12:44-50

*The good news of Jesus is HIS goodness
is what matters not YOURS!*

How About You?

Imagine standing in that crowded Temple so long ago . . . How would YOU respond to the truth of Jesus? Would you be offended that your goodness wasn't good enough? Would you be relieved that God didn't demand goodness but offered grace? Would you be ready to receive the Good News of Jesus? If you're ready - you can do that right now! Right where you are.

Prayer of Salvation: Hey Jesus - it's me _____. You know me well enough to know my history. My past is no surprise to you. You know the good, the bad, and the ugly about my life and you love me anyway. If the words I read today are true, then salvation is from YOU ALONE and that's really good news!! Jesus - I'm calling on your name today to save me. To forgive me. To rescue me from the endless pursuit of trying to be good enough. Thank you for giving your life so that I could have life eternal. Amen.

Jesus said . . . "You will know the TRUTH
and the Truth will set you FREE." ~ John 8:32

Wednesday - April 8

Where's Jesus? Seriously. Where did he go? Has anyone seen him today? This is a BIG week and he's gone. Shouldn't he be in the Temple again today giving them some fiery words like yesterday? Shouldn't he be out healing? Or feeding? Or something?

Where is Jesus?

Have you ever felt that way? I have. More times than I'd like to admit I've internally asked those very same questions. But on this Wednesday before Good Friday, Jesus had a unique lesson that he wanted to teach us. Perhaps, Jesus wanted to show us what Sabbath looked like by not showing up to the party.

The Absent Savior.

As you already know, 10 Days with Jesus is a journey into the final 10 Days of Jesus the Messiah. But on this Wednesday of Holy Week . . . the scriptures give us absolutely no record of where Jesus was.

No teachings. No miracles. Nothing.

Really? How can the Savior of the world just disappear at a time like this? This is go time! It's Holy Week. For crying out loud - it's two days before your crucifixion. But here's the truth about the absent Savior . . .

Jesus sees US even when we don't see HIM.

He's God Almighty. The Creator and Sustainer of the universe. The Alpha and Omega - the Beginning and the End. He's the God that is present even when we don't see his presence. And on this Wednesday of Holy Week, perhaps Jesus wanted to show us the priority of Sabbath. More than likely, Jesus was practicing Sabbath in preparation for the grueling days ahead. Often we read that, "Jesus sent the crowds home and went up into the hills by himself to pray."

~ Mark 6:46.

The First Sabbath.

Sabbath isn't just a Jewish thing - it's a God thing. God instituted the Sabbath as a reminder of who's in charge. A reminder that pointed to HIM. The world was only 7 days old when Yahweh God spoke the words of Sabbath over his creation.

"On the seventh day God had finished his work of creation, so he rested from all his work. And God blessed the seventh day and declared it Holy." ~ Genesis 2:2

The Hebrew word for Sabbath is "sabot" which means to rest, to stop, to cease from working. And right there in the Garden of Eden, at the very beginning of all time - God spoke the blessing of Sabbath into his creation.

*The Sabbath is a weekly reminder that
GOD is in charge and WE are not.*

Why would God take a rest when things are just getting started? Why would he stop the momentum of creation with a giant pause? I thought God was super strong and never got tired? Isn't this the God that can do anything? Why would he stop what he had just started? Here's why . . .

God didn't need REST . . . but he knew that WE would.

God knew way back at the beginning that life would get difficult. He knew that the stress of family, work and ruling the earth would become tiresome. He knew that day-after-day of doing would not be good for humankind. God had created us as human BEINGS and Sabbath was a weekly time to just BE. In fact, God was so adamant that the practice of pausing would be part of our weekly rhythm, that he included it in his top 10 Commandments.

“Remember to observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. You have six days each week for your ordinary work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath day of rest dedicated to the LORD your God.” ~ Exodus 20:8-9

A command? Don't we have enough commands already? But this command was different. This command wasn't a burden. It wasn't one more thing to put on our to-do list. In fact, it was just the opposite . . . Sabbath was a command to stop *DOING* and start *ENJOYING*.

Sabbath Takes Work.

The truth is that Sabbath takes work! We can't just kick-up-our-heels and hope the universe takes a break along with us. Is it possible to Sabbath in our modern day culture? Even the weekends are jam packed with stuff. Not to mention the constant stream of media that follows us like a shadow. The tension of Sabbath is that if I stop working - who's going to keep things going?

And that's a logical argument if we're the only ones working - but we're not the only ones working! We're not God and it doesn't all depend on us.

Jesus said, “My Father is always working, and so am I.” ~ John 5:17

I first read that passage 20 years ago and was moved forever by the truth that God is working when I am resting. That God is working on my behalf when I'm not working. That God can accomplish "infinitely more than I could ever ask or imagine." ~ Ephesians 2:10

Jesus is always WORKING so I can enjoy RESTING.

Hebrews 10:1-12

"¹ The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship... ¹¹ Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins... ¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand."

Jesus said, "It is finished!" ~ John 19:30

Jesus FINISHED the work that I'm still trying to DO.

The Rhythm of Sabbath.

Sabbath is about resting in the work that God has done, is doing, and will do. Resting in the truth that God can change hearts even if you can't. That God can restore your marriage even if you can't. That God can provide for your needs even if you can't. That God can break your addiction. That God can bring them home. That God can forgive. That God can _____ (fill in the blank).

Sabbath is about RESTING . . .

and resting is WORSHIP.

Matthew 11:28

Jesus said, "Come to ME, all who are weary and carry heavy burdens - and I will give you rest."

Hebrews 4:10

For all who have entered into God's rest have rested from their labors, just as God did after creating the world.

Psalms 91:1

Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

My friend - lets worship today by resting in God. Let's carry His truth and His power into the everyday stuff of life. Let's practice the Rhythm of Worship.

Happy resting!

The rhythm of reading, praying, and listening has proven to be a helpful guide to practicing Sabbath. Use the resources below to help you get started.

Psalm 91

¹ Those who live in the shelter of the Most High
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

² This I declare about the Lord:
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;
he is my God, and I trust him.

³ For he will rescue you from every trap
and protect you from deadly disease.

⁴ He will cover you with his feathers.
He will shelter you with his wings.
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.

⁵ Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,
nor the arrow that flies in the day.

⁶ Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

⁷ Though a thousand fall at your side,
though ten thousand are dying around you,
these evils will not touch you.

⁸ Just open your eyes,
and see how the wicked are punished.

⁹ If you make the lord your refuge,
if you make the Most High your shelter,

¹⁰ no evil will conquer you;
no plague will come near your home.

¹¹ For he will order his angels
to protect you wherever you go.

¹² They will hold you up with their hands
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

¹³ You will trample upon lions and cobras;
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your feet!

¹⁴ The Lord says, "I will rescue those who love me.
I will protect those who trust in my name.

¹⁵ When they call on me, I will answer;
I will be with them in trouble.
I will rescue and honor them.

¹⁶ I will reward them with a long life
and give them my salvation."

- -

Rest.

Breathe Slow.

Thank God.

Pray.

By: Farrell Mason ~ The Pocket Cathedral - A Collection of Prayers

Loving God,

Remind me again in Your tender,
holy way that I am not alone -

That You are with me always.
I feel fragile and afraid, weak.

I know it is part of being human,
But it squeezes my spirit.

I cannot face another day relying
on my own limited strength and powers.

If only I could trust in the larger,
mystical, and redemptive plan at work.

Give me the courage to
close my eyes, bow my head and
surrender over my heart to You.

Teach me to quiet my life enough
to allow You to speak a word of
clarity, hope, and love into my depths.

Anoint me with Your divine understanding
so I would rest assured that whatever

I must face today or tomorrow
Will not overtake me.

When the pangs of loneliness,
uncertainty and fear come -
and they will . . .
Carry me.

In Your most tender voice,
speak to my inner being:

Be still, and know that I am your God.
Have stitched you in before and behind
with my love. There is no place you can go,
even the darkest deep, that I will not be with you.

Stardust my life with signs
of Your transcendent presence -

And I will finally dare to take faith's leap.

Amen.

Thursday - April 9

Jesus had less than 12 hours until his Crucifixion. He had spent 33 years headed straight into the mission of Good Friday and it was almost time. But not quite yet. Right now . . . on this Thursday evening . . . it was time for Supper. Centuries later we now refer to that meal as The Last Supper.

Jesus spent his last night sharing

The Last Supper with his FRIENDS.

Jesus spent his final few hours before the cross sharing an intimate meal with his closest friends. Oh to be a guest at that table! To hear the stories, the jeers, the inside jokes, and the parting words of the Master to his followers . . . his friends. In fact, it was at that very meal that Jesus said these words . . . “I no longer call you servants - now you are my friends.”

A Seat at the Table.

For just a few minutes, let’s pretend that we are at the table with Jesus and the 12. Let’s mind our manners, keep our elbows off the table, and listen closely to the conversation between Jesus and his closest friends. (John 13-17)

This was a special evening. This was the first night of Passover and the seven day holiday always started with a big meal. The meal was a reminder of that first Passover night centuries ago in the land of Egypt. This meal (the one we snuck into) was just the beginning of an entire week of celebration.

Passover was the annual holiday that celebrated Israel's deliverance from Egyptian slavery. Everyone at the table had celebrated this meal their entire life, but tonight was going to be different. Tonight they shared the table with the real-life, in-the-flesh, *PASSOVER LAMB*. Tonight was their last night with Jesus, but they still didn't get it. This would be the meal that the truth about Jesus started to sink in for the first time. This would be the meal that Jesus would clearly tell them the plan of salvation . . .

Death.

Burial.

Resurrection.

Ascension.

This was the meal that Jesus said these words (John 15:13) . . .

"There is no greater love than to lay down your life for your friends."

(Come on Jesus - enough of the negative talk. It's holiday eve and it's time to celebrate not ponder the deep meaning of life.)

Jesus knew this was the last meal he would share with his friends and he wanted to FRIEND them. He wanted to speak truth, joy, and peace into their life while he still could. Jesus wanted to model for them what true friendship looked like.

Show Me the Love.

Friend. That's a loaded word. I've got 1,400 friends on Facebook and a whopping 65 "followers" on Twitter. Friends is such an empty word these days. If we're going with the Jesus definition of friends then I'm only looking at a handful of people I would even think about "laying my life down for!"

This passage has always seemed like Jesus pulled out the trump card on his disciples by saying that a true friend would be willing to die for their friends. I mean really, I've had a lot of good friends over the years but none of us have given our life for each other. In fact, most of the time, it's difficult to even schedule a night that we're all free for dinner.

But like most things Jesus said, this loaded statement had a much deeper meaning . . . a meaning that was doable and practical. A meaning that would change the way we view friendships.

You see, the greek word for lay down your life is the verb *"tithemi"* which means *"to bow down, to serve."*

And the greek word for friend is the verb *"philos"* which means *"to be friendly."*

Wow J. - that was so helpful?! Hang with me . . . that actually does change things a bit. If friend is a verb then it's something we do, not something we are. If friend is a verb then we had best learn how to start "friending" each other!

The word Jesus used for friend was a VERB . . . it was an ACTION.

With our newfound understanding this verse could easily read like this . . .
"There is no greater love than to spend your life serving your friends."

OK. Now we're making some progress. Friends Love. Friends Serve. Friends (insert verb) each other. But how? How do we act on a normal Thursday that mirrors this type of friendship? How do we friend each other in the everyday stuff of life? Here's the good news . . .

*Everything we need to know about FRIENDING
we can learn from JESUS at the Table.*

A closer look at our passage in John shows us four ways to serve our friends.

1 - Serve with your Presence.

Let's start with the obvious. You can't serve your friends unless you're near your friends - being present is part of the deal. It feels strange even typing those words. Isn't it common sense that we need to be present? It is common sense, but sadly it's not very common. In our culture of capitalism, business and saying yes to a bazillion things, we have good intentions but less-than-desirable actions. Being PRESENT is the first step to being a good friend.

Jesus said to his disciples . . .

"I have been very eager to eat this Passover meal with you before my suffering begins." ~ Luke 22:15.

"I will be with you a little longer, but don't let your hearts be troubled. I am going to prepare a place for you. When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be where I am." ~ John 14: 2-3.

The promise of Jesus was that his followers would be present with him forever.

2 - Serve with your Words.

The Jewish Proverb says, "Death and Life are in the power of the tongue" (Proverbs 18:21). Chances are you didn't need me to remind you of that. Your mind is full of words that you wish had never been said to you or spoken over you . . . but the opposite is also true. Our words have the power to bring LIFE.

Back to our supper . . . Jesus knew the importance of his words that evening. He knew that hours from now his closest friends would be afraid, confused and discouraged. So in that moment - that final night together - Jesus used his words to bring truth, joy and peace to his closest friends. So can we.

John 14:10-12

Jesus said to his disciples, "I am in the Father and the Father is in me. The words I speak are not my own, but my Father who lives in me does his work through me . . . I tell you the TRUTH."

John 15:11

Jesus said to his disciples, "I have told you these things so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes, your joy will overflow!"

John 16:33

Jesus said to his disciples, "I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."

His words were truthful.

His words were joyful.

His words were peaceful.

One thing I'm learning at the Table of Jesus is that my words matter.

3 - Serve with your Actions.

Words are good but they're not enough. The old adage is true - actions speak louder than words. Actually, they reinforce words. They bring those words to life by showing their meaning. It's so easy in the wordiness of life to throw our words around with no real action to back them up.

Words matter - but ACTIONS are better.

John 13-15

So Jesus got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. Then he said to them . . . "And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet - you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you."

The moral of the story isn't about feet, it's about friendship.

Remember - friendship is love in action. Jesus wanted to SHOW his disciples how to friend each other not just TELL them how. The creator of the entire universe was kneeling at their feet and serving them. The disciples were the servants - HE WAS THE MASTER!

But in his Kingdom, Jesus said . . . "Among you it will be different. Those who are the greatest among you should take the lowest rank, and the leader should be like a servant." ~ Luke 22:26.

*You can't FRIEND like Jesus friended
without SERVING like Jesus served.*

4 - Serve with your Prayers.

This is the hardest of all. Serving your friends in prayer is joining them in spiritual battle. Prayer is standing shoulder-to-shoulder and proclaiming the truth straight into the face of the evil one. It's no joke. It's not easy. Or fun.

But it matters.

Prayer matters.

Late into that Passover night, Jesus modeled the importance and practice of prayer. The truth that we're about to learn is a game-changer. Practicing the rhythm of prayer leads us to discover two types of prayer.

Jesus was praying WITH us and FOR us.

Praying With.

Praying with - is about joining forces with Christian friends for spiritual support, encouragement and accountability. We practice this type of prayer with our church, our small group, our co-workers, our family. WITH includes others. Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him, and he became deeply troubled and distressed. He told them, "My soul is crushed with grief to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." ~ Mark 14:33-34.

Praying For.

Praying for - is about getting alone with God himself and asking for his power, protection, and favor to fall on those whom we love the most. It's the unselfish prayer that focuses on the needs and struggles of those around us. FOR is with you and God. Jesus prayed to the Father . . . "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one . . . I am praying not only for these disciples, but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message." ~ John 17:15-20.

Jesus spent his last night on earth

PRAYING with and for his friends.

How About You?

- How are you doing at Friending?
- Are you serving others well?
- Which area needs some attention . . .
 - ☐ Your Presence.
 - ☐ Your Words.
 - ☐ Your Actions.
 - ☐ Your Prayers.
- Who can you serve this week?
- How can you serve them?

Good Friday - April 10

Good Friday? What's so good about six unjust trials throughout the night? What's so good about betrayal from the inside? What's so good about the Christ on a cross? What's so good about watching your friends scatter? Your mother suffer? Your FATHER turn his back? What's so good about Good Friday?

*The ONLY thing good about Good Friday is that
Jesus was taking our place on the CROSS.*

The truth of the Gospel is that we could never be good enough to stand in the presence of a perfect God. Only Jesus could pull that off. Only a perfect person could take the place of the guilty. Only a living sacrifice could produce an eternal reward. Jesus is the ONLY solution and the ONLY way to God his Father.

Good God.

Once upon a time . . . actually at the beginning of all time . . . there was a Good God. I mean really good, as in there was no bad in him at all. No evil. No wrong. No coulda, shoulda, woulda in his timeline. His rap-sheet didn't have a single blemish and it never would. It would be forever spotless. Blameless. Perfect.

This Good God was actually PERFECT - that's what made him God.

Before anything and everything - God was GOOD.

But this Good God was different - is different - from any other god you may have ever seen or heard about. This God was unique at the very core of Himself. This God was actually a supernatural, unexplainable, indivisible compilation of three distinct natures - all part of ONE GOD.

*This God existed in perfect harmony with himself as
God the FATHER - God the SON - and God the SPIRIT.*

He wasn't lonely. Or bored. Or trying to find himself. In fact - it was quite the opposite. God was joyful, and content, and full of love. God had himself and HE WAS ENOUGH. But love always wants to share itself with others, and God wanted to share himself with someone. But there was no-one. There was nothing to share himself with. So God created something and someone to share in his love, his creativity, and his magnitude. Something good.

The torrent of Creation began with a WORD - God spoke and it happened. Each part of his unique creation would begin to take shape. Each part would joyfully enter the stage of time and accept its role in the good story of the Good God. And at the end of each day . . . the Good God would speak one single word over his creation . . . GOOD.

It's ALL Good.

And with the dawn of each new day, God would resume his good work of creating a good place for a good purpose. His purpose. His plan.

And on the pinnacle day of the whole creation story (Day 6) - God created his favorite of all his created things. God created mankind. Man was the only work of Creation that was created "in the Image of God." Man would have a unique responsibility in this good place, and therefore a unique relationship with God himself. And when God the Father looked down on his special creation of man, he spoke these words over Adam . . . VERY GOOD.

This new creation - this prized possession of God the Father - was placed by God himself into a Good Garden. A Garden named Eden, the Hebrew word for “pleasure.” This story is sounding pretty good, and it was good. In fact - it was ALL GOOD. There wasn’t a single thing wrong with the whole world. No anger. No jealousy. No depression. No addiction. NO-thing was wrong at all.

God had Created a world that was ALL GOOD.

But it didn’t stay that way for long. Man didn’t follow the Good Plan laid out by the Good Father. The first one of us thought he knew better than the Creator of us. And before we join the throw-Adam-under-the-bus club . . . we should know that we’re no different than Adam. We should remember that we violate our own code of Good and Evil every single day.

Adam did what we do. His story is our story.

So right there in front of God and everybody . . . Man did his own thing. He turned his back on the Good God - God the Father - God the Creator . . . and chased a lie. A lie that told him he was good enough. A lie we still believe.

Adam believed a LIE that cost Jesus his LIFE.

And for the first time since time began,
the Good God said . . . This is “Not Good.”

The Good Plan.

But God the Father wasn’t OK with being separated from his creation. After all, the whole reason for creation in the first place, was to have a special relationship

between God and man. A relationship that overflowed with love - not shame. So, God came looking for Adam. God came NEAR.

God entered the middle of “Not Good” with a “Good Plan.”

God the Father entered the once-perfect garden in search of the once-perfect man. No Good Father could ever turn his back on his creation. This was his chance to make things right. This was his opportunity to show man how much he loved him. The Garden of Eden was the beginning of the Easter Story.

God moved towards Adam for the sole purpose of redeeming him, not punishing him. Don't get me wrong - punishment would be required. No Good God could allow evil to exist without enacting his wrath upon the evil. No Good God would stand by idly and watch his creation struggle with no solution. No Good God could possibly turn his back on what was right in front of Him.

God didn't turn his back - He offered his SON.

Adam was lost in his SIN but God offered him SALVATION. Right in front of the bushes where Adam had been hiding . . . God performed the very first payment for evil. God the Father took the life of an innocent lamb as the payment for Adam's sin. This would be the first of many payments. Jesus would be the last.

The innocent had been slain for the guilty - the Good Plan of God had begun. Centuries later . . . the promised Messiah would take his place on that once-for-all-altar called Calvary and offer himself as the final payment for the sin of all mankind. Not just Adam's sin, but yours and mine too.

“While we were still sinning - Christ died for us. For the sin of this one man, Adam, brought death to many. But even greater is God's wonderful

grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.” ~ Romans 5:8-15

Good News.

The good news of Good Friday is Jesus. He is the Lamb of God. The payment for our sin. The one and only way to the Father. The one who forgives. The one who gave his life so that you could have life eternal.

Jesus Said . . .

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son (Jesus), so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life” ~ John 3:16

The Good News about Good Friday is
that you don’t have to be GOOD ENOUGH.

The Good News about Good Friday is
that Jesus paid the penalty for sin
so that YOU don’t have to.

The Good News about Good Friday is
that on that dark Friday that we call Good . . .
Jesus became the Lamb of God who took away
the sins of the world. ***That’s why it’s called Good Friday!!***

How About You?

- Do you believe the Good News of Jesus?
- Have you received the Good News of Jesus?
- Have you shared the Good News of Jesus?

DAY

9

Saturday - April 11

"It is Finished."

Those three words echoed in the ears of the hiding disciples. They were the very last words of the "Messiah" they had followed for the past three years. Those three words didn't make sense. They had been waiting for a Messiah, a Deliverer, a King. But their King was dead.

The words "It is Finished" didn't just kill Jesus - It killed their dreams.

The Tomb had been sealed. The guards had been posted. The story was over. Now What? Do we just go back to being fishermen? Or tax-collecting? Do we move-in with our parents after we abandoned the family business to follow "The Master?" This "Rabbi" taught us everything, but didn't deliver us from anything. Sure, He loved us - but he left us.

For the first time in 3 years - Jesus was SILENT.

Here's the hard truth . . . the story of Easter didn't end in SILENCE but it did INCLUDE silence. And on this Saturday before Easter Sunday, we're going to explore 3 Reasons that God is Silent.

3 Reasons God is Silent.

#1 - Silence gives us space to HEAR what we've already HEARD.

Jesus had told the disciples on numerous occasions about the Good Plan of Salvation through him. There were no twists, turns, or surprise endings. His message had not changed and it was clear.

“Jesus told them that the Son of Man must suffer many terrible things and be rejected by the elders, the leading priests, and the teachers of religious law. He would be killed, but three days later he would rise from the dead. And he said this plainly.” Mark 8:31-32.

They had HEARD the words of Jesus then but they didn't hear them NOW. Now felt pretty empty, dark, and alone. Now felt like 1,000 miles away from then. Now felt like a whole new world. But here's the truth that the disciples refused to hear - the words of Jesus that were true back THEN are still true NOW.

*Jesus did EXACTY what he said he would do -
but it wasn't what they THOUGHT he would do.*

And just like them, we're tempted to do the same. We love God's promises when things are going great, but we dismiss them when things start falling apart.

When it's all good . . .

We're praying, and tweeting, and sharing praises with our “small group.”

But when things get a bit messy . . .

We start questioning, and blaming, and hiding out “until the storm passes by.”

Isn't that where faith enters? Aren't we called people of faith for a reason? If we're so faithful why aren't we FULL of faith? Maybe one of the reasons that God is silent is that he wants us to hear what we've already heard?

Sometimes SILENCE is the only voice of God that we HEAR.

Jesus had told his disciples at The Last Supper . . .

"I tell you this beforehand, so that when it happens you will believe that I AM the Messiah." - John 13:19.

"I have told you all this so that you may have PEACE IN ME.

Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows.

But TAKE HEART, because I have overcome the world." - John 16:33

Jesus had told his disciples at His Ascension . . .

And be sure of this: "I am with you always, even to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:20.

Maybe silence gives us space to re-listen, re-play, and re-hearse the TRUTH that God has already shown us.

#2 - Silence gives us space to GROW our faith.

Faith is a strange word. It's an even stranger question.

"Are you a person of Faith?"

"Do you have Faith?"

"How's your Faith?"

I mean really - what is faith? Is it something we get from the church?

Is it something we're born with? Can you have more of it than I have?

Can you see it? Touch it? Doesn't everyone have Faith in something?
Don't we all believe that our way is the best way? What is Faith?
Faith is complicated.

The truth is that we ALL have faith in SOMETHING.

We all see life through the lens of uncertainty. We all have questions without answers. We all believe in something - even if that something is ourselves, or NO thing at all. So to be brief . . . we all have Faith.

For the record - my faith is in Jesus. Not in myself, or you, or the church, or the government. Anything other than Jesus is a shallow faith. Anything short of a resurrected Christ is not worth placing my faith in.

That being said - the most accurate account of Jesus is in the Bible . . . so technically, I also have faith in the Scriptures. If the pages of scripture are telling us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth; then my faith is formed and strengthened by the verses below.

"Faith is the confidence that what we hope for will actually happen;
it gives us assurance about things we cannot see." Hebrews 11:1.

What is Faith?

Faith is believing.

Faith is believing that God is WHO he says he is.

Faith is believing that God will DO what he says he will do.

If faith is about believing God, then it's quite possible that - the very places and circumstances that we try to avoid are the places where our faith is grown.

It's possible that God not only allows us to enter seasons of silence, but places us into seasons of silence. It's possible, and I believe scripturally probable, that God uses the silent places to grow us more than the active places. God told Moses to "Be still and know that I AM God." And nothing seems more still than silence.

Sometimes WAITING will grow us more than DOING.

Faith Isn't.

Faith isn't the ABSENCE of fear, it is CONFIDENCE to overcome it.

Faith isn't confidence in YOURSELF or OTHERS - it is confidence in JESUS.

Faith isn't about you, or me, or anyone other than Jesus. Faith isn't about trying harder, or going deeper, or doing more. Faith is the humility to stop looking for anything or anyone else to be the solution that only Jesus can be.

*Faith is admitting that more of anything,
other than JESUS, still won't be enough.*

"Looking to JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." ~ Hebrews 12:2

"It was by Faith that Moses left the land of Egypt, not fearing the king's anger. He kept right on going because he kept his eyes on the one who is invisible."
~ Hebrews 11:27

*Sometimes SILENCE forces you to look
for a SOLUTION that's bigger than you.*

#3 - Silence gives us space to SHOW our faith.

Hebrews chapter 11 is hands-down the most comprehensive study of the word faith in the entire scriptures. It's actually referred to by many as "The Hall of Faith" because of its recounting the faith-full acts of the Old Testament prophets and the New Testament disciples. And right there at the end of the entire chapter of the "Who's Who in the Kingdom of God" . . . it ends with this truth.

"All of these people earned a good reputation because of their FAITH,
yet none of them received ALL that God had promised" - Hebrews 11:39

(That's pretty cool J. - but I'm not feeling any warm and fuzzy's from that verse!)
And I've felt that way about this verse for years until I realized that this verse has two hidden meanings that may have been lost in translation.

The phrase "earned a good reputation" in Greek is actually just one word.
It's the word "*martyreo*" that means "to witness or to testify"

Martyreo is a VERB.

Martyreo is an ACTION.

Martyreo is something you SEE.

Martyreo is from the word MARTYR.

Martyreo is about offering your LIFE.

Martyreo is your FAITH on DISPLAY.

Let's read that verse again and apply the truth of "martyreo" . . .

"All of these people (showed witness) of their FAITH,
yet none of them received ALL that God had promised" - Hebrews 11:39.

*Faith isn't something you HAVE on the inside -
it's something you SHOW on the outside.*

Their Faith was on display for the whole world to see. Their faith made people ask questions about God. Their faith created conversations. Their faith was proven by their actions. Their faith was visible. Is your faith visible? Is mine?

It's possible that the SILENT times are when your faith is the LOUDEST.

The second half of that same verse is just as powerful when it comes to understanding faith. The second half of Hebrews 11:39 says . . . "none of them received ALL that God had promised." That means that some of the promise is still on the way.

Faith is believing that God isn't DONE yet.

"So do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you! Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive ALL that he has promised."

~ Hebrews 10:35-36

We're almost there - hang with me . . .

"It is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him must believe that God exists and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him."

~ Hebrews 11:6

"For in just a little while the Coming One will come and will not delay."

~ Hebrews 10:37

The Apostle Paul said in Acts 13:23 . . .

“Jesus is God’s promised Savior of Israel.”

Do you see it?

The Reward is Jesus.

The Coming One is Jesus.

The Promise is Jesus.

Jesus is the Promise that we’ve been waiting for
and The Promise is on the way!

On that dark Saturday after the Crucifixion the disciples were waiting for The Promise and wondering if it was still true. What they didn’t know then, but we know now, was that Sunday was coming. The Promise was on the way. Saturday felt defeated, discouraged, and alone, but The Promise would show up on Sunday.

It’s Saturday . . .

but Sunday’s Coming.

Don’t give up.

Don’t loose heart.

Don’t loose hope.

Don’t stop listening.

Don’t stop looking.

Don’t stop believing.

Don’t lose your faith.

Believe that Sunday is coming.

Easter Sunday - April 12

This was the worst weekend ever. The disciples had watched their Master be mocked, beaten, crucified, and buried in a borrowed tomb. The dust hadn't even settled yet on the betrayal of Judas, the midnight trials, the shouting mob, and the dying Messiah. Things were dark. Spirits were low. Doors were locked.

But Jesus wasn't DEAD.

He was ALIVE.

And he had defeated DEATH.

Matthew 28

¹ Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb. ² Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. ³ His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint. ⁵ Then the angel spoke to the women. "Don't be afraid!" he said. "I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He isn't here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. ⁷ And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you." ⁸ The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel's message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them. And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him.

The beauty of Easter Sunday is that Jesus conquered DEATH.

No other religious leader before or since has been able to conquer death.

No other belief system in the world claims to worship a resurrected Messiah.

A you can't hold me down . . . Messiah.

A death isn't the end of my story . . . Messiah.

A you can kill me but my father will raise me . . . Messiah.

Jesus said, "I AM the resurrection and the Life. Anyone who believes in me will LIVE." John 11:35 The resurrection of Jesus was the final proof that he was the long-awaited Messiah, the Christ, the in-the-flesh Son of God who came to bring eternal life to all those who believed in him. Even Jesus said that the final sign of his divine authority would be his resurrection after 3 days.

Matthew 12

³⁸ One day some teachers of religious law and Pharisees came to Jesus and said, "Teacher, we want you to show us a miraculous sign to prove your authority." ³⁹ But Jesus replied, "Only an evil, adulterous generation would demand a miraculous sign; but the only sign I will give them is the sign of the prophet Jonah. ⁴⁰ For as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

The entire Christian faith hinges on the TRUTH of the resurrection.

If Jesus DIDN'T rise from the dead:

- > He's no different than we are.
- > He's the biggest fraud that ever lived.
- > None of his teachings can be trusted.
- > We're all wasting our time.

But, if Jesus DID rise from the dead:

- > We can put our faith in him as the Messiah.
- > We can follow his teachings with certainty.
- > We can have a personal relationship with God.
- > We can walk in freedom and victory.

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But the Disciples still didn't know that Jesus was ALIVE.

They deserted Jesus during the darkest hour, and now they were hiding behind locked doors. Words had been said. Tempers had flared. Belief had been lost. The whole message of Jesus had died with Jesus - or so they thought. Little did they know that Jesus would break through their prison walls of fear, doubt, and shame to finally set them FREE. They could have never imagined what would happen next . . .

John 20

¹⁹ That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! He said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! ²¹ Again he said, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." ²² Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

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Jesus was ALIVE and he wasn't going to let his disciples live in FEAR and SHAME any longer. The same power that rose Jesus from the dead was the power that would set them free. The same disciples that had doubted and deserted would carry the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Hours after the resurrection of Jesus, he would once again bring peace and comfort to his closest disciples. In fact, he broke into the locked room on Sunday evening to remind them of 3 PROMISES.

The 3 Promises of Jesus.

Promise # 1 - "I am with you."

Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them!

He said, "*Peace be with you.*" ~ John 20:19

"Peace be with you" literally means "Peace is joining you." Jesus joined them in the middle of their fear, their shame, their doubt. But he didn't scold them or condemn them for being afraid, instead he offered them PEACE. He offered them proof. He offered them himself. HE was the peace they had been looking for all along, and no matter how dark the situation seems, you can have Peace because Jesus is with you . . . right where you are . . . locked rooms and all.

Promise # 2 - "I am sending you."

"As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." ~ John 20:20

The greek word for sending is the verb (apostello) which means "set apart or called out." The encouraging part of this story to me is that Jesus was sending them on a mission even after their mistakes. He wasn't looking for PERFECT followers - he was looking for FORGIVEN followers that were ready to go to the ends of the earth. Jesus never intended his disciples to create "holy huddles" of perfection . . . he was inviting them into the messiness of life. He was inviting them to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the least, the lost, and the broken. The mission of Jesus isn't about vocation its about location. Jesus was sending them to the EVERYDAY places of life with the Good News of the Gospel. He's sending you too! Are you ready to go?

Promise # 3 - "I am filling you."

Then Jesus breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." ~ John 20:22

The Disciples had been with Jesus for 3 years and had never experienced what was about to happen soon. Jesus had promised them at the Last Supper that “he would be going away but he would leave the Comforter behind.” ~ John 14: 16
They had no idea how much better the COMFORTER would be.

The very SPIRIT of God would live INSIDE of his people.

Everyday.

All day.

24/7

365

God’s Holy Spirit is our teacher, our guide, our encourager, and our comforter. He will never leave us or forsake us. He illuminates the scriptures, helps us fight temptation, and delivers us from the attacks of our enemies. He gives us strength when we’re weak, patience when we’re frustrated, joy when we’re in the middle of the storm, clarity when we’re lost, gentleness when we’re rough, and self-control when we feel out of control. Jesus made a PROMISE to be with us and the Holy Spirit is keeping that promise every single day - till Jesus returns!

Ephesians 1:13-14

¹³ And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. ¹⁴ The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Amen.

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