



## ▶ DAILY DEVOTIONAL.

**Saturday/Sunday, 3/31-4/1/18**

**“He Is Risen! Alleluia!”**

**Mark 16:1-8 (NIV)**

*When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?”*

*But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.*

*“Don't be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”*

*Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.*

**Family Activity:** Happy Easter! This week we take time to celebrate the Resurrection and the gift of eternal life. Resurrection rolls are a hands-on way to tell the story of Jesus's burial and resurrection. You can find the recipe and instructions below. After Jesus died, his body (marshmallow) was prepared for burial with oil (butter) and spices (cinnamon/sugar). He was sealed in a tomb (crescent rolls). Three days later, the tomb was empty. Jesus rose from the dead, he is alive! Once you have baked your rolls, they will be empty on the inside, just like the tomb!

### Resurrection Rolls

#### *Ingredients:*

- 1 (10 ounce) can refrigerated crescent dinner rolls
- 8 large marshmallows
- ¼ cup melted butter
- 2 tablespoons ground cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons white sugar

#### *Directions:*

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees or as instructed on crescent rolls
2. Combine cinnamon and sugar in a small mixing bowl
3. Melt butter and keep in a separate mixing bowl
4. Take each marshmallow and dip them into the butter and then the cinnamon/sugar mix
5. Wrap each marshmallow in one crescent roll. Be sure it is completely sealed and place on a baking sheet
6. Bake the rolls for 12-15 minutes, or until golden brown. As you wait, read John 19 & 20
7. Carefully open the rolls and celebrate that Jesus has risen!

**Monday, 4/2/18**

**“Thanks be to God!”**

**1 Corinthians 15:50-58 (NIV)**

*I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: “Death has been swallowed up in victory.”*

*“Where, O death, is your victory?*

*Where, O death, is your sting?”*

*The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.*

- Here, the apostle Paul is encouraging the community in Corinth; a community that found itself caught in the trappings of the pagan world in which it lived. Paul points the community to Jesus and what he accomplished through his death and, ultimately, his resurrection. Paul says that, because Jesus has conquered death, it has lost its power over those who stand firm in the faith and fully devote themselves to the work of the Lord; that we, too, will one day experience a resurrection like his. Paul says that this reality presents itself to us as a mystery. What is your understanding of the “mystery” of resurrection? What does Jesus’ resurrection mean to you?
- What do you think Paul means by encouraging Jesus’ followers to “stand firm?” How can you practice standing firm in your faith? What would it look like for you to fully give yourself to the work of the Lord?

**Prayer:** Lord, we give you thanks that you are risen! We thank you for what you have done for us and all of your creation; that all can experience life in you. Help us to stand firm in our faith as resurrection people, giving ourselves fully to you and your work. In the name of Jesus, and through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Tuesday, 4/3/18**

**“My Lord and my God!”**

**John 20:24-29 (NIV)**

*Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!”*

*But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”*

*A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.”*

*Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"*

*Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."*

- People don't typically raise from the dead these days (understatement). The thing is, they didn't in the first century either. That's why I think Thomas gets a bad rap. Throughout history, he has been given the unfortunate name of "Doubting Thomas." I think "Realist Thomas" would be better, because Thomas acknowledges what anyone would have acknowledged ... people simply don't raise to life after having been dead for three days. But then again, maybe "Faithful Thomas" would be the best name of all. Once Thomas had seen Jesus and physically touched his wounds, he makes the very first announcement of Jesus' true nature that we encounter in scripture. Faithful Thomas says, "My Lord and my God!" I think all of us experience moments of doubt from time to time, in regard to our faith ... that's simply part of our fallen nature. What doubts do you sometimes struggle with? What does it look like for you to live with Jesus as your Lord and God? During times of doubt?

**Prayer:** Lord, we thank you for the witness of Thomas, who rightfully spoke of who you truly are. Help us to live our lives with you as our Lord and our God. Walk with us through our doubts and build us up so that we walk not by sight, but by solid faith in you. Use us to make your name known to all we encounter today. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Wednesday, 4/4/18**

**"Open Eyes"**

**Luke 24:13-16, 28-31 (NIV)**

*Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.*

*As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.*

*When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight.*

- This scene takes place after the tomb had been found empty, and one can imagine the disciples being overwhelmed by the events that had recently transpired. Jesus had been killed on a Roman cross, and now he is said to be alive, that the tomb was empty and the linens used to embalm Jesus were just lying there inside. So, Jesus meets them on their journey to Emmaus, but they did not recognize him. It wasn't until Jesus sat down with them, broke bread, and gave it to them that their eyes were opened and they saw the risen Jesus. Sometimes we have trouble recognizing Jesus in our midst. Sometimes we are distracted by the events that transpire in our lives. Where do you see glimpses of the risen Jesus at work in your life? In the lives of those around you?
- What practices can you undertake to gain more of an awareness of Jesus in your midst? (Prayer? Scripture reading? Fasting? Holy conversation?) What steps can you take, today, to make those practices a part of your daily life?

**Prayer:** Lord, we confess that we don't always see you; that we are often distracted. Help us to turn our gaze daily to you. Open our eyes to your work in our lives, in the lives of those around us, and to the ways that we can share your unending love with the world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Thursday, 4/5/18**

**"The Promise"**

**Acts 1:1-11 (NIV)**

*In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen. After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God. On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

*Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"*

*He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

*They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

- The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke, and is written by the same author. Acts 1 picks up right where Luke leaves off: with Jesus' Ascension. Before Jesus leaves, though, he makes the disciples a promise that they will be the ones to make Jesus known to the ends of the earth, that they will do this by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and that Jesus will one day return to establish his kingdom in its fullness, forever. This is Jesus' parting promise. This promise is for us today, as well. However, just like the disciples, we can be caught "looking into the sky," meaning that we are often focused on where we *think* Jesus is to be found (somewhere up in the sky), but fail to recognize Jesus' presence all around us. In so doing, we also tend to neglect the Holy Spirit-empowered work that Jesus has called us to. Who is the Holy Spirit? What does it mean to be empowered by the Holy Spirit? In what ways do you recognize the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in you and those around you?
- Jesus also promises his return, when he will establish his kingdom in its fullness. What do you think this means? How might you, with the church community, take part in Jesus' kingdom-building work? (Who can you help/encourage/speak grace and truth to?)

**Prayer:** Lord, we are grateful for your promise. We are grateful for the gift of the Spirit, your continual presence with us, to guide, direct and teach us. We pray that by your Spirit you will lead us in the kingdom-building work you call us to. Bring people into our lives who we can model and speak your grace and truth to. In Jesus' name. Amen.

**Friday, 4/6/18**  
**“Song of Praise”**  
**Psalm 16 (NIV)**

*Keep me safe, my God,  
for in you I take refuge.  
I say to the LORD, “You are my Lord;  
apart from you I have no good thing.”  
I say of the holy people who are in the land,  
“They are the noble ones in whom is all my delight.”  
Those who run after other gods will suffer more and more.  
I will not pour out libations of blood to such gods  
or take up their names on my lips.  
LORD, you alone are my portion and my cup;  
you make my lot secure.  
The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;  
surely I have a delightful inheritance.  
I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;  
even at night my heart instructs me.  
I keep my eyes always on the LORD.  
With him at my right hand, I will not be shaken.  
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;  
my body also will rest secure,  
because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead,  
nor will you let your faithful one see decay.  
You make known to me the path of life;  
you will fill me with joy in your presence,  
with eternal pleasures at your right hand.*

- Psalm 16 is a song of praise to God for his faithfulness. The apostle Peter quotes this psalm in Acts 2, making the case that Jesus is the one that this song is referring to. Peter is saying that David, the author of this psalm, is the primary witness to God’s plan for the Messiah to die and rise and to bring salvation to the people. Read this psalm a few times throughout your day. Where do you hear Resurrection in its words? Where do you see Resurrection in the world around you?

**Prayer:** Let this psalm be a prayer of praise and of Resurrection for you today.

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