2022 EASTER OFFERING

JESUS' PASSION, OUR PASSION

Experiencing the Transforming Power of the Resurrection

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The days between Palm Sunday and Easter represent the most significant week of the Christian calendar. As we track Jesus' steps through those days, it is marked by so many important snapshots, each one inspiring us to greater commitment to service and devotion. As we submerge ourselves into Jesus' persistent and selfless march to Golgotha, we understand why Christians have for centuries set aside this week as one dedicated to worship and reflection.

Sometimes, we want to join them. At our most noble, we hope that Jesus' passion might become ours as well. We sense the Lord calling us to walk with him through the events of this Holy Week.

This set of writings helps us accept that invitation. Relying mostly on Mark's Gospel, each reflection focuses on what Jesus was doing on that day, and guides us into a similar sort of experience. The format emphasizes discerning prayer and scripture reading. The biblical passages are short and meant to be read three times during each sitting. This allows for prayerful reading, depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us into greater awareness of its content, then seeking insight for our own life, and finally identifying a point of practical application. Each day also includes brief thoughts to prompt deeper reflection.

Notice, there is space to write down any of your insights and applications. Writing our observations, insights and applications often plants the ideas deeper into our souls, helping them to fully integrate into our lives. Scribbling even a phrase or two is often beneficial.

You might like to engage in this process with a group of others because it is mutually beneficial to share our experience. The support of other Christians, usually demonstrated through encouragement and accountability, allows us to more effectively follow Jesus' instructions. Obedience leads to integration. This integration releases us into the abundant life Jesus calls us to enjoy.

The small group experience could revolve around sharing three simple questions: What insights did you receive from your reading? How might you put those insights into practice in everyday life? And, how can we support you – prayer, encouragement, accountability? Spiritual growth thrives in this kind of supportive group.

Finally, you received a copy of this devotional guide because you have supported Jesus' passion through the work of Evangelical Friends Mission. We offer it as a gift, grateful for your support.

Most of all, we pray that it will enhance your relationship with the One we worship during Holy Week. May you experience the transforming power of the resurrection as Christ's passion becomes your passion!

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Palm Sunday:

The King Knows: The Work's Not Yet Finished

Simple Prayer: Lord, help me to see your work with your eyes!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 11:7-11

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: While Jesus' entrance to Jerusalem might have been exhilarating for some, Jesus (the celebrated King himself) was not so impressed. After the parade, Jesus made his way to the temple. He looked around. The view – every nook and cranny packed with extorters looking to prey on worshippers' sincere devotion – cemented his commitment to finish the work his Father had commissioned him to accomplish. It would be demanding to confront a religious system that financially and socially rewarded position, power and pretense over sincere obedience and humble service. There was work to be done.

And not for the first time, the King recognized it would cost him his life!

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: Ask the Lord to show you where his work is not finished in you, your church, and your world. Make a note and look for opportunities to grow or help in those areas!

Short Prayer: Finish your work in me, your Church and in the world.

Our Passion: Jesus' work is still not done. He is answering his/our prayer that his Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven. Mysteriously, he has chosen human beings to be his agents. Incredibly, he calls some of his people to leave their own culture and usher in his Kingdom among a different people. We call these persons missionaries. As we, who are here, send missionaries, who go there, we are all working together to finish the King's work.

Notes

"Lord, help me to see your work with your eyes!"

Monday:

Prayer Is a Conversation, Not a Transaction

Short Prayer: Jesus, teach us to pray!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 11:15-17

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: The Monday of Holy Week, Jesus insisted (rather strongly, eh?) that the Jerusalem temple was not a place where God's love can be bought or sold. It was to be a place where everyone was welcome. In it, they were to know and practice the intimacy of communion with the Living God. Jesus identifies prayer as a primary practice.

Later, Christians understood the temple as a people rather than a place (for example, Paul in Ephesians 2:21-22). In other words, Jesus' followers form a hospitable community where everyone can experience communion with God. Again, prayer is often the catalyst for spiritual experience.

Often, a call to "pray more" induces a sense of guilt. Most of us recognize we should pray more and feel badly that we don't. Maybe today, this passage could serve as an invitation (rather than a chore) to venture into deeper fellowship with Christ. We can focus on relationships, shedding any sense that answers to prayer depend on our performance. Maybe our actions will inspire others to do the same.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: The disciples were impressed with Jesus' prayer life, and asked Jesus to teach them to pray. Ask the Lord to deepen your prayer life as well. Set apart time today or tomorrow to extend your usual prayer time – five minutes is a good start.

Short Prayer: Lord, teach me to pray with the same conviction that you prayed.

Our Passion: The essence of the Gospel is that our relationship with God is not dependent on trying to appease his anger or earn his pleasure. It is a gracious summons into a life filled with ongoing interaction with him. It is one of the great inspirations of carrying the Good News to other cultures. Missionaries attest that the joy of prayer (as a relationship rather than a transaction) is embraced with such enthusiasm that they themselves are inspired to pray more. This communion is a part of the power of the resurrection. Our passion is to grip it more tightly.

Notes

"Jesus, teach us to pray!"

Tuesday:

Jesus' Invitation to a Full and Free Life

Short Prayer: May I find delight in you and your Word today!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 12:35-37

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: This story comes during a long day of teaching. As on other occasions, Jesus' words landed clearly. Jesus' instruction wasn't designed to impress. Its purpose was to transform. His words bathed the listener's soul in truth, grace and love. He crafted his words to transform. People relished them.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: Read all of Mark 11:20 – 13:37 (a record of all of Jesus' teaching on this day) or all of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), considered to be some of the greatest teachings of all time.

Short Prayer: Teach me to delight in your teaching and to put it into practice.

Our Passion: We rely on the work of the Holy Spirit to take scripture and help us envision a changed life. When this kind of conviction lands, and when it becomes a product not just of hearing but of doing as well, it becomes transforming. Our missionaries regularly tell stories of this kind of transformation. For example, check out this story from Rwanda at **https://friendsmission.com/prayer/december-2021-prayer-letter/.**

Notes

"May I find delight in you and your Word today!"

Wednesday:

Grace, Gratitude and Generosity

Short Prayer: Cultivate in me a thankful and generous heart!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 14:3-9

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: While we don't know much of what happened on Wednesday of Holy Week, it's likely that it was the day a woman performed an act so full of gratitude, generosity and grace that Jesus added it to the Gospel Hall of Fame. The story is spare in detail. Clearly, though, the woman's expression of faith touched Jesus. This woman obviously knew Jesus, had encountered an extraordinary touch of his grace, and could "see" in a way that many others couldn't that he was on his way to a tomb. Her generous and grateful response stirs us to this day.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: Find a financial need. Lavishly and anonymously answer it. Jesus will know.

Short Prayer: May my generosity flow out of deep gratitude for your grace in my life!

Our Passion: From the beginning of the Church, God's work has been funded by the generous contributions of God's people gratefully responding to God's grace. That process is still at work and God's work flourishes around the world today. God's people send missionaries so that others will experience the same grace. This is how it has worked with EFM for nearly 60 years. Those of us who see this generosity are deeply touched and grateful. Thank you!

Notes

"Cultivate in me a thankful and generous heart!"

Maundy Thursday:

The Flavor of Salvation

Short Prayer: Teach me to "taste" your sacrifice.

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 14:22-26

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: Jesus celebrated a Passover meal on the night before his death. During it, he invited his disciples to a greater understanding of the Passover. His own coming sacrifice – a broken body and shed blood – would provide salvation to all who would partake. Undoubtedly, those who shared the table didn't fully comprehend the gravity of his actions. Still, the weightiness of the moment revealed in Jesus' actions an expression of care. Certainly, this Passover meal carried with it a profound yet bewildering meaning...

...and so, they did what was left for them to do. They sang.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: Inventory the ways you have experienced God's salvation. Use these as an impetus to worship.

Short Prayer: Salvation is mine.

Our Passion: We do not always comprehend the depth of Jesus' work in our lives. However, like the disciples, we see his care and love for every person. We are grateful that his desire that all would experience eternal life includes us. This awareness awakens within us a compelling purpose: that this salvation would not only transform us, but also our children and grandchildren, our neighbors, our co-workers, and even those who live far away from us. It is our expression of love. It is our passion.

Notes

“Teach me to ‘taste’ your sacrifice.”

Good Friday:

God Dies

Short Prayer: May I experience your passion!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 15:37-39

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: With his last gasp of breath, Jesus declared that he had accomplished his life's work. He became obedient to death, even to death on the cross. Ironically, while many around him spoke of his defeat, in pronouncing, "It is finished," Jesus declared victory.

The intensity of this moment reverberated across the valley, burst upon the temple, and slashed the partition dividing the room that housed the humans from the chamber that was God's alone. No more separation!

The significance of the moment was palpable to those paying attention. Even the Roman executioner recognized Jesus' death as inexplicably marked by divinity. Somehow, this man undeniably was the Son of God.

Read for Application: (How do I respond?)

Possible Application: Humbly reflect on the passion of Christ.

Short Prayer: I am unable to repay your kindness. I accept it humbly. You are my Savior. You are my God.

Our Passion: The curtain is torn. Nothing stands between flawed humanity and perfect God. We are humbled by the combination of kindness and power that distinguishes Jesus' love. It tears down the walls that separate Jesus and humanity, and humans from one another. This deep work of Jesus, a breathtaking work that powers us to our knees is accomplished on behalf of every human being. Just as Jesus' love compelled him to finish his work, his love compels us to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God...

...even if it costs us everything.

Notes

"May I experience your passion!"

Quiet Saturday:

There Is Power in Waiting

Short Prayer: Teach me to wait on you...

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 15:42-43

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: What now? Jesus hung limp. On a cross. Joseph of Arimathea hurried to retrieve the corpse and entomb it before the nation shut down. The next morning, Sabbath, Joseph found himself still waiting. He had thought the wait was over. His hope had surged as he heard Jesus promise the Kingdom's fulfillment. Now the Messiah was dead and laid in a garden grave meant to be his own. He sits sequestered away, beleaguered with sorrow, fear, questions. Will the Kingdom of God ever come?

Within the doubt, however, Joseph may have recalled Jesus insisting, "On the third day [the Son of Man] will be raised to life." That seed of hope was planted. Sometimes, it takes time for a sprout to rise up out of the ground, right?

So, he waited.

Read for Application: (How will I respond?)

Possible Application: Be still and know that God is God. He will be exalted in the nations. He will be made known on earth. Wait for it.

Short Prayer: I will wait on you, Lord. You are at work. I can't see it. So I will wait.

Our Passion: Throughout history, Jesus' followers have found themselves waiting. 120 waited in an upper room. Fifty days later, the Holy Spirit came on them in power. Paul and the other early missionaries waited for direction in Troas. The door finally opened for them into Macedonia. The Gospel spread into new frontiers eventually covering the Roman Empire.

Waiting is a part of the Christian life. We depend so completely on Jesus' direction that we don't budge until Jesus tells us to move. But when he speaks and we follow, the result is transforming. So, we wait – expectantly, humbly and knowingly. Our stillness affirms Jesus is the one who does it and that he does it best.

So, wait for it!

Notes

"Teach me to wait on you..."

Easter:

He Is Risen

Short Prayer: Teach me how to rejoice in you!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Mark 16:4-8

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: This morning was unfolding unexpectedly. The out-of-place boulder tipped them off. Then, a resplendent figure sat inside the tomb. Then, the inconceivable words. Jesus is dead no more. "He is risen!" Overwhelmed by the moment, the next words – go tell the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee – hardly registered. Terror-stricken, they turned, fled and spoke to no one.

Obviously, they recovered. Later, they did spread the word.
But, in that instant, a resurrection was beyond comprehension. Resurrection reveals inconceivable magnitudes of supremacy, potency, authority.Resurrection unleashes power that transforms defeat into victory, shame into honor, condemnation into absolution, rejection into belonging, despair into hope, foolishness into wisdom, old into new, death into life for all who believe. Jesus wields this power. The resurrection is his coronation. He is the everlasting King of Kings.

Read for Application: (How will I respond?)

Possible Application: Wear joy on your sleeve today (and sing loud)!

Short Prayer: You are my King! Hallelujah!

Our Passion: The resurrection is Jesus' ultimate expression of victory. His power, strength and sovereignty wrapped in deep love fuels his ongoing redemptive work in all creation. His followers fully (and undeservedly) enjoy all the benefits of this resurrection power. And on this day, we passionately worship our King, recognize his might, humbly accept his love and joyfully commit to his reign in our lives, in his Church and in the world.
We join the loud chorus of Christians who greet this day and one another with the declaration: "He is risen! He is risen indeed!"

Notes

"Teach me how to rejoice in you!"

The Monday After:

Make Disciples

Short Prayer: Teach me how the power of the resurrection can transform the world!

Read for Context: (What does it say?) Matthew 28:18-20

Read for Insight: (What is God saying to me?)

His Passion: Jesus made his ultimate command clear. He is unwilling that any should perish and desires that all would experience eternal life. He opened his Kingdom to all who would enter. His plan centers on his followers making disciples. It is well within his authority to commission this venture and he furnishes his people with everything they need to achieve this eternity-altering assignment.

Of course, the Holy Spirit is always at work, drawing all of humanity to him. It is Jesus who unleashes this gospel of power to transform the world.

Read for Application: (How should I respond?)

Possible Application: Who around you could use a taste of Jesus' transformation? Pray for them!

Short Prayer: Jesus, you are a great teacher. Teach me to tap into the power of the resurrection to make disciples, even today.

Our Passion: Maybe making disciples is less intimidating than we think. Jesus teaches that we grow spiritually when we listen to his voice and follow (John 10). That is the essence of discipleship. At its simplest, then, disciple-making is "helping others grow spiritually." We help people grow spiritually by helping them listen to Jesus' voice and to follow. This is the essence of disciple-making.

Perhaps this loose translation of the Great Commission can ease our doubts. "I [Jesus] have complete control of the universe. So, everywhere you go, help everyone you encounter grow spiritually, immersing them into the fullness of the Trinity, training them to follow me in every way. And don't forget. I am with you – forever!"

This is a vision of a world-wide movement of disciple-making. It is our privilege to follow our King into this life. It is full of service, sacrifice and significance. It is the abundant life. It is our passion.

Notes

"Teach me how the power of the resurrection can transform the world!"

Afterward

We would love your feedback. If you are willing to share the impact of these devotional exercises, please email stan@friendsmission.com.

Here are a few additional resources you might find helpful.

- Disciple-Making: Simple as 1,2,3, Infinity provides a short basic approach to disciple-making that is accessible to anyone and can be utilized in any circumstance. Download at http://bitly.ws/on7r.
- Lectio 365 is a daily devotional app that follows a similar approach to that used in "Jesus' Passion, Our Passion." Find it at your app store.
- Join our monthly Luke 10:2 Prayer Gathering. Sign up at https://friendsmission.com/prayer-gathering/.

If the Lord impresses upon you to financially support EFM, you can give:

- Online at http://friendsmission.com/easter/.
- By credit card over the phone at **303-421-8100.**
- By mailing a check to **PO Box 771139, Wichita, KS 67277.**

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