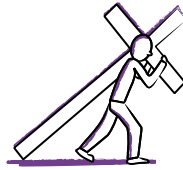


# ROAD OF SUFFERING

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## ROAD TO GLORY

A LENTEN ADVENTURE WITH THE SAVIOR





# ROAD OF SUFFERING

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## ROAD TO GLORY

### A LENTEN ADVENTURE WITH THE SAVIOR

Our favorite stories are filled with drama, intrigue, memorial dialogue and of course triumph as good emerges out of insurmountable odds. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the life of Jesus. Sin has entered the world, Satan has influenced its system and the very people that He came to save are not always receptive; quite the contrary they can be very antagonistic. Tracking the events around Passion Week we see Jesus taking step by step toward his date with destiny on the cross. When all seems lost his victory over the grave signals absolute triumph over sin, death, Satan and all its consequences.

In this Lenten Adventure with the Savior, 30 pastors and Christian leaders, spanning over 25 denominations and organizations, contributed to this devotional: "Road of Suffering; Road to Glory." It is a labor of love and of hope. In answer to John 17:20-21:

<sup>20</sup> "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, <sup>21</sup> that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.

May this devotional be a step, among many, to unify his church so with one voice, heart, and mind we will proclaim Jesus Lord that the world may believe!

Johnson Chiu  
Editor



# WHAT IS LENT?

## LENT IS A SEASON OF SPIRITUAL PREPARATION

Jesus went into the wilderness, for 40 days, tempted by the devil, confirming his convictions and his purpose as he began his ministry, culminating in his death on the cross, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

## LENT IS A SEASON OF SELF-EXAMINATION

Forty days before Easter, Jesus' resurrection, excluding Sundays, is a time of prayer and introspection that reaches out to God with heartfelt honesty and hope. We bring to bear our frailties upon his power, grace and salvation in Jesus.

## LENT IS A SEASON OF SURRENDER

The spiritual life is ultimately one of dying to self and being alive unto God. Lent allows a length of time to reflect, consider, and weigh in the balance, our life's direction and purpose. Happy is he who finds death to self is the way to life in Jesus.

## LENT IS A SEASON OF SHARPENED FOCUS

As we turn our attention to God, we intentionally minimize what distracts. In ages past, saints gave up something as a token of their intention to focus. You may choose, for a season to forego a special food, hobby or task to "make more room" for God.

## LENT IS A SEASON OF SERVICE

Jesus, our Lord and Savior, taught his disciples well but also demonstrated they are to live it out. Lent moves our hearts and minds toward the eternal purposes of God and calls us to actively engage in the world in which we live.



WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 25

ASH WEDNESDAY

## OUR LENTEN HOPE

Jerry Wong, Senior Pastor, Maranatha Bible Church, San Ramon

*<sup>1</sup> Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. <sup>2</sup> But he answered them, “You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down.” <sup>3</sup> As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?”*

(Matthew 24:1-3, ESV)

How will things end? We will read the articles and watch the documentaries about what will come our way in the next millennia. We will spend inordinate amounts of time looking at what will come in the next season whether it's fashion or electronics. We are fascinated with movie trailers of upcoming mega blockbusters and look forward to the new TV season. Sports reminds us there's always next year — whether amateur, professional or fantasy. We give no thought to the questions the disciples posed. Why, obviously because things will never end? We will continue the constant evolution towards higher self-awareness and social harmony. There WILL be an end to poverty, world peace and there WILL be equality for all. This will happen not because of some grand master plan for human improvement, rather it's because there is so much available time. Jesus draws a sharp contrast in the gospels. The grandeur of the temple — the symbol of human accomplishment for the glory of God; the temple that has stood for so long will fall. Jesus visits the temple with His disciples and makes this audacious claim. What does this mean they ask? It means the end. Our most cherished monuments to personal accomplishment will end. Such is the shocking truth of Jesus' statement. But, at the end of verse 3, Matthew writes that the disciples expected Jesus to come again, “what will be the sign of your coming?” There will be a coming. And in that expectation lays the remedy for the terror of the end and the tyranny of countless regrets. End to all we cherish? Yes, but also an end to all we fear. Will it be a zero sum gain? No, Jesus comes. Our experience, even in the best of times is bittersweet and a mixed bag of good and bad. When Jesus comes, this age ends and He ushers in His age. What will it be like? The full reality awaits the return of Jesus. Until then, there is always our Lenten hope.



THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 26

## ON THE JOB

Jay Thompson, English Pastor, San Jose Canaan Christian Church, San Jose

*<sup>33</sup> Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. <sup>34</sup> It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. <sup>35</sup> "Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back — whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. <sup>36</sup> If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. <sup>37</sup> What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!' "*

(Mark 13:33-37, NIV)

We are like slaves of the master, each with a job to do, commanded not only to stay awake but stay alert. Ever been a slave? Can you identify with this illustration? Ok, let's modernize. It's like a radio station sweepstakes. You could win a year off from work, travel to the destination of your choice, all expenses paid, and even have someone to cover all your needs. All you have to do is answer an incoming text message within thirty seconds of receiving it. Would you be ready? Of course you would because you understand the immensity of the situation. What is Jesus talking about? He is pretty serious about his subject. Is anyone listening? We are in an age of testing. The end of this age is coming. When the end comes, there will be a judgment, an accounting. There will be an accounting of what was done in the testing phase.

What job has Jesus given you to do? If you don't know, it is time to find out. As Christians we are his slaves; we are his agents in this world. Our job is to continue Jesus' work, sharing his "Good News" with everyone; offering his salvation and healing to the world. Yeah, it can be intimidating. Some people won't get it. Some people will reject you along with the message. They rejected Jesus too. They crucified him. Fortunately for us, Jesus didn't fall asleep. If the task was easy it wouldn't be much of a test, would it? You might not need to learn trust. You might not need to bother seeking the master. You might begin to think you don't need the master. You might begin to think that you are the master.

Are you on the job and alert?





FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 27

## LIVING HIS VALUES AWARD

Steve Quen, Senior Pastor, Bay Area Bible Church, San Leandro

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, <sup>36</sup> I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ <sup>37</sup> “Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? <sup>39</sup> When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ <sup>40</sup> “The King will reply, ‘I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.’

(Matthew 25:34-40, NIV)

While working as a software engineer, we would have quarterly department meetings, run by my boss’ boss. During these meetings one employee would receive the “Living Our Values” award. You would be eligible to receive this through some deed that exemplified one or more of the company’s core values. The employee would get a “trophy” and a dinner for two anywhere you would like (until people started abusing it!). Well at a particular meeting the “big” boss started describing this employee and what he had done, after a while to my surprise, I realized he was speaking about me! I had won this award even when I wasn’t consciously trying to win it, and honestly couldn’t articulate the core values of our company. No matter where on the future timeline we place this passage, or who we define as “sheep”, “goats” and “least of these brothers”, sometime in the future, Jesus is going to commend some believers, to their surprise, who have loved Him at great risk, without consciously trying. This loves the Lord far beyond serving Him out of duty or expectation, or obeying Him to win the approval of others. It even is going beyond asking ourselves, “What would Jesus do?” because that involves thinking. It is the challenge of “living the values” of Jesus, because His life has become part of our life, because we truly are growing in having the “mind of Christ,” it is living the scriptures because they are truly internalized into our life! This could be one of the highest rewards for a Christian! The believers in this passage give us an example of transformed lives, lives changed from the inside out, by the resurrection power of Christ and this kind of life is available for believers today.



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 28

## THE MIND OF GOD

James Shum, Pastor, Chinese Presbyterian Church of Oakland

*<sup>3</sup> Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. <sup>4</sup> And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. <sup>5</sup> They were delighted and agreed to give him money. <sup>6</sup> He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.*

(Luke 22:3-6, NIV)

Who can know the mind of God? This passage calls us to explore how a human being can be influenced by the power of Satan. The passage tells us that “Satan” entered into Judas Iscariot. We certainly will ask, “Did God give permission to Satan that Satan may control Judas’ mind and actions?” This happened to Job because God let Satan put him on trial. As a result Job had to confront his wife, his friends, Satan and even God.

Today God may give permission for Satan to enter our hearts so that we may be on trial too. If this happens to you, will your attitude and life change? On the other hand, God protects us from falling into Satan’s hands. The Holy Spirit will guide us all the way. He provides with a conscience and free will for us to make decisions to follow God or to follow Satan.

Please do not forget that Satan always makes good use of God’s words from the scriptures and many worldly attractions to lead us astray. Those thirty pieces of silver were strong enough to attract Judas to betray his master. In the same token there are many things that surround us that are mighty enough to lead us astray from the destination that our Master had planned for us. If we honor God as our Lord, King, and Savior our commitment to follow Jesus needs to be strengthened and enforced from time to time. Lent is the season for us to nurture our soul. This is the time for us to pray, to meditate, and to worship the Almighty — this is the mind of God. Are you able to understand that?



SUNDAY, MARCH 1

## GOD ALWAYS PROVIDES

Bruce Wong, Pastor, Cumberland Peninsula Community Church, Millbrae

*<sup>7</sup> Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.” <sup>9</sup> “Where do you want us to prepare for it?” they asked. <sup>10</sup> He replied, “As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, <sup>11</sup> and say to the owner of the house, ‘The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ <sup>12</sup> He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.” <sup>13</sup> They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.*

(Luke 22:7-13, NIV)

By the time Jesus arrived, the Jews were well-versed in how to eat the Passover. After reading the Law and following the traditions and interpretations attached to it for hundreds of years, they knew when and how to celebrate it. Perhaps the only question in the disciples’ minds was where.

Jesus did not answer that question directly by telling them exactly where to go; instead, He told them to look for a man carrying a jar of water. But the disciples might have wondered: Where would he be? What time would he be walking? How full would the jar be? What if the room was not ready? How much might he charge us? The bottom line was that the disciples would have to have faith that Jesus knew beforehand that they would meet this man and that things would be as He said, and not as they wondered.

That’s what it means to follow Christ — to trust in the assurance that He knows what He is doing. Just as Abraham took Isaac up the mountain, trusting that God would provide a sacrifice, just as Joshua marched the Israelites around Jericho thirteen times in seven days, and just as Jeremiah kept preaching even though no one responded to him, we too, have to keep trusting in Jesus, even if we don’t know the whole plan.

He will provide, quite often in ways we don’t expect and always in ways we don’t deserve. That’s grace on His part. And for us to receive that grace requires faith on our part. That’s the beauty of Ephesians 2:8-9.

So however dark or difficult the path may be, know that God has a purpose and that He will always come through. He is faithful; we can trust Him.



MONDAY, MARCH 2

## WHAT IS A TRUE SERVANT?

Louis Lee, General Director/Founder, Ministries for English Speaking Asians, Elk Grove

<sup>12</sup> When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. “Do you understand what I have done for you?” he asked them. <sup>13</sup> “You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am. <sup>14</sup> Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another’s feet. <sup>15</sup> I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. <sup>16</sup> I tell you the truth, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. <sup>17</sup> Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

(John 13:12-17, NIV)

Jesus helps us get beyond mere words to the reality of being a true servant. It begins by embracing our identity in our relationship with God (13:3). We are created and redeemed by God. Our ultimate purpose is to honor and glorify Him. This eternal perspective frees us from clinging to earthly status to serve others in genuine humility and love. Jesus provides a clear and practical example (13:15) of how a servant serves. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples (13:4-5). Foot washing was a common, practical act of service since the roads were dusty. Sandals were removed and feet were washed, generally by servants. Servants of today must serve in a culturally relevant and practical manner. Jesus connected spiritual blessing with his practical service of washing the feet of his disciples (13:6-11). Jesus connected spiritual cleansing with physical washing. Some are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good, others so earthly minded they are of no heavenly good. It’s not an “either-or” choice, but a “both-and.” God’s servants address both the earthly and heavenly needs of people.

I cut my neighbor’s front lawn because he has four young children plus a long commute to work. I told him it would be my joy to see him invest 20 more minutes each week with his kids rather than with his lawn care. I told them I serve their needs as an expression of God’s love for them. My neighbors are being drawn closer to our Father’s heart. We will experience blessing when we both know and do practical acts of service that bless others (13:17). “Father, help me be more of a servant like Jesus. Help me respond to the needs of people as Jesus would for your glory. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.”



TUESDAY, MARCH 3

## THE GREATEST OF THEM ALL

Sam Tsang, Dr., Overseas Theological Seminary, San Jose

*<sup>24</sup> Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. <sup>25</sup> Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. <sup>26</sup> But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. <sup>27</sup> For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. <sup>28</sup> You are those who have stood by me in my trials. <sup>29</sup> And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, <sup>30</sup> so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

(Luke 22:24-30, NIV)

Luke 22:24-30 falls within the Last Supper narrative as Jesus prepares to head to the cross. These are literally some of the last words taught by Jesus before His Passion. They are also important words to think about for the Lenten season.

Jesus first starts with a negative model in verse 25. He mentions the system which the Romans set up where benefactors receive honor for exercising authority over their subjects. In such a system, free grace and servitude are not high priorities. Jesus then goes into positive models in the remaining verses in order to show the significance of His kingdom system. The two points he mentions also corresponds to His present suffering and future glory. First, He first talks about the kingdom as a reversal from a worldly of dictatorship to service in verses 26-27. Second, He talks about the eschatological significance of the disciples' authority. What then is Jesus saying? He is essentially saying that serving in this life prepares for authority in the next. If the Son of Man will serve in this life, so should His disciples. If the Son of Man receives authority in the eschaton, so will His followers. Every communion then should be a reminder of such kingdom values. In this Lenten season, we may want to think about how our daily walk is a lesson to serve. In so doing, we should remain alert as to what serving opportunities are available even if we live outside of church because our lives here and in the future both reflect the life of Christ. Prayer for the day: Lord, show me the serving opportunity right where I am. Help me to take the opportunity to serve.



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4

## WAITING FOR THE WORDS OF JESUS

Kenny Chan, English Pastor, Chinese For Christ Church of San Jose

*<sup>36</sup> Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." <sup>37</sup> Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." <sup>38</sup> Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!*

(John 13:36-38, NIV)

In this passage of Scripture, once again we see Peter, the future leader of the church, sticking his foot in his mouth by biting off more than he could chew. On one hand, you have to admire Peter for his bravado and willingness to lay it all on the line for the Lord Jesus, yet on the other hand, you have to laugh at him for making such a 'boisterous claim.' Peter would go on to publicly deny knowing the Lord Jesus three times within a relatively short period of time. Immediately afterwards, the Scriptures tell us that Peter wept like a broken man (Luke 22:62).

Yet, I wonder how often as followers of Christ, we tend to be like Peter in thinking or behaving as if 'we could do anything'. Now, perhaps we wouldn't be so boisterous or arrogant to say it publicly, yet privately, that's what we think or assume. I know for myself, I've unwisely made some claims or commitments which later on I've come to regret. And, when I've stopped to mull over and honestly reflect on what motivated my claim, I have to admit that more often than not, it's primarily because I trusted in my own understandings and abilities rather than humbly coming before the One who truly knows everything, including me, and trusting in His direction.

Jesus' reply in verse 38 to Peter's claim strikes at the heart of his reliance and dependence. However, this reliance and dependence is more self-directed and self-driven rather than Christ-centered. I wonder for us today, in our circumstances, might we be facing a situation in which we're looking to ourselves or our own understandings rather than trusting or waiting upon His direction. Let me encourage you to perhaps wait until you sense His clear direction or leading in this matter rather than rushing off or rushing ahead of Him.



THURSDAY, MARCH 5

## DON'T FORGET HIS GRACE

Edward Chan, Pastor, First Chinese Southern Baptist Church, San Francisco;  
Living Water Chinese Baptist Church, Marin

*<sup>22</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." <sup>23</sup> Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. <sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."*

(Mark 14:22-25, NIV)

Long time ago, a man migrated to the United States. Since he had difficulty adjusting to life in America, he felt depressed and scared. During that time, he met a Christian who was full of mercy and love. The Christian greatly assisted him during this time of need. Initially, he was willing to go church because he thought the church would continue to help him through every difficulty.

Year by year, day by day, his needs seemed to be solved. One day, he did not go to church any more. It seemed like he disappeared from the area. The pastor tried to call him many times but he did not reply.

Thinking about this man, who had a lot of grace, received a lot of assistance from many people, but has chosen to become an ungrateful person. Eventually he gave up his faith.

Our Lord Himself set up the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:24-30). He reminded us not to be ungrateful. Bread and wine are actually very common items during dinner in Jewish society. However, when Jesus was eating the last dinner with His twelve disciples, he felt people were ungrateful. He needed His people to remember Him at all times. Therefore, He set up the Lord Supper.

Nowadays, when the church pastor lifts up bread and wine in accordance with what our Lord commanded, it once again lets His people begin to remember His Grace, His crucifixion, and His endless love. It may revive and strengthen us to keep on walking with God. Let us not be forgetful nor ungrateful people!



FRIDAY, MARCH 6

## Do You Know Your Father?

James Shum, Pastor, Chinese Presbyterian Church of Oakland

<sup>1</sup> “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. <sup>2</sup> In my Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. <sup>4</sup> You know the way to the place where I am going.” <sup>5</sup> Thomas said to him, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going, so how can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup> Jesus answered, “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup> If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him.”

(John 14: 1-7, NIV)

This famous passage reminds us Jesus is “The way, and the truth, and the life.” We may overlook the latter part of this verse: “ ... if you had known me, you would have known my father also hence forth you know him and have seen him.” Besides Moses who else has seen God face to face? Jesus brought up this subject to help us re-establish our relationship with God. Let us answer the question that Jesus asked; “If you had known me (Jesus) you would have known my Father also.”

Christians claimed that they are the followers of Jesus. They need to ask, “Do I really know who Jesus is?” We sing in the hymn “Everybody ought to know” so loud and clear. Yet, how many of us deeply appreciate the lyric of the hymn? Do you confess that “He’s the Lily of the Valley, he’s the Bright and Morning Star, and he’s the Fairest of ten thousand everybody ought to know?” Yes, everybody ought to know but do you really know Jesus? Would you confess that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life? If you do are you able to share with us “How has Jesus change your life after you followed him?”

Jesus made it very clear that if you know Him, and follow Him, you will know God the father. John 1:18 says, “No one has ever seen God; the only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known.” So if you knew Jesus, you would know the Father also. Do you know God your Father?





SATURDAY, MARCH 7

## BEARING FRUIT

Thomas Chen, Youth Minister, Chinese Church in Christ, San Jose

<sup>5</sup> “I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> If anyone does not remain in me, he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you. <sup>8</sup> This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.

(John 15:5-8, NIV)

As a teenager, I was never in the “in” crowd. I don’t like reminiscing on those years because I remember not feeling very significant. Peer pressure can affect a person greatly, causing one to feel less about oneself just because he/she is not like everyone else.

As followers of Christ, we inevitably face pressures from the world we live in. In today’s passage, the disciples were living in the midst of such pressures. This was a crucial moment for the disciples. As time came for the leaders of Israel to arrest Jesus, He challenges the disciples with an important decision. He has shown that He surpasses Israel in every aspect as the True Vine. Israel was a fruitless people who did not fulfill their role. Are they going to attach themselves to Israel like everyone else? Or are they going to attach themselves to Christ?

Jesus tells His disciples, “Apart from Me you can do nothing.” Jesus knows that soon the disciples’ faith will be shaken. So His message for them is very crucial: “Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.”

Today we face the same decision. Will we go along with the values of the world in the midst of such pressures? Or will we abide in Jesus and commit to His eternal values?

The same disciples who fled when Jesus was crucified were the same ones who held onto their faith to the end. Because they decided to abide in Christ, we are here today because of their fruit. May we abide in Christ, the True Vine, so that we can bear fruit for His glory, and so prove to be His disciples.



SUNDAY, MARCH 8

## GOD'S SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Grace May, English Ministry Pastor, Oversea Chinese Mission, New York

<sup>12</sup> "I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come.

<sup>14</sup> He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you. <sup>15</sup> All that belongs to the Father is mine. That is why I said the Spirit will take from what is mine and make it known to you.

(John 16:12-15, NIV)

Not surprisingly, the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures is the illuminator of the Scriptures. To have God's Spirit as our guide and interpreter gives us the assurance that we can apprehend the truth. For no one less than God can fully understand and impart the mind of God (1 Cor. 2:11). If it is Jesus' express will for the Spirit to lead us into all truth (John 16:12), then who better to have as our teacher? For the Spirit aids us in making sense of God's Word; the Spirit not only helps us to mine the depths of God's Word, but to create the space for God to lodge his Word deep within us.

When the Word brings conviction that is the Spirit at work; when a person heeds the Word that is also the Spirit at work; to experience the nexus of the Spirit and the Word is powerful.

The irrefutable evidence the Spirit is at work is that the credit goes to Christ. For the Spirit, no less than the Father and the Son, takes part in the self-giving nature of the Trinity, with each deferring to and loving the other. What could be more humbling than to be invited to join the circle of divine love? Yet by God's grace many will enter during this Lenten season as we give ourselves to God and one another.



MONDAY, MARCH 9

## I GET IT ... I THINK

Bruce Wong, Pastor, Cumberland Peninsula Community Church, Millbrae

*<sup>28</sup> I came from the Father and entered the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father.” <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus’ disciples said, “Now you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech. <sup>30</sup> Now we can see that you know all things and that you do not even need to have anyone ask you questions. This makes us believe that you came from God.” <sup>31</sup> “You believe at last!” Jesus answered. <sup>32</sup> “But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”*

(John 16:28-33, NIV)

I think the disciples were in a fog for most of their time with Jesus. They often misunderstood Him, they jostled with each other for the best place in the Kingdom, they wanted to rain judgment on the Samaritans, they were not able to heal because of their lack of faith, they were fearful of the storms, and the list goes on and on. Finally, in this passage, the light went on in their heads. They proudly announced, “Now you are speaking clearly ... Now we can see ... This makes us believe ...” But Jesus did not want them to become complacent or self-confident in their new understanding. A stable life is not a static life. After all, life is not constant; it is full of changes. A great today does not always mean a great tomorrow. Jesus warned them that they would be scattered and their faith would be shattered (they would desert Him).

But along with those two warnings, Jesus gave them two assurances. The first was that He knew everything that was going to happen. There are no surprises with God. And if there are no surprises with Him, then there should be no surprises with us. We can rest in the assurance that we are never outside of God’s watchful eye or the reach of His loving hand.

The second assurance is that although we will have trouble in this world, He has overcome the world. The God who created everything from vastness of our universe to the intricacies of our bodies remains powerful enough to overcome both our opponents and our failures. So if we can rest in His foreknowledge and in His strength, we can have peace. We can have His perspective, His presence, and His power to see us through everything in life.



TUESDAY, MARCH 10

## JOY IN UNITY

Paul Lee, Pastor, Berkeley Chinese Baptist Church, Berkeley

<sup>13</sup> But now I am coming to you, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have my joy fulfilled in themselves. <sup>14</sup> I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>15</sup> I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. <sup>16</sup> They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. <sup>17</sup> Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. <sup>18</sup> As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. <sup>19</sup> And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth. <sup>20</sup> "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. <sup>22</sup> The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, <sup>23</sup> I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me.

(John 17:13-23, ESV)

What's this joy that Jesus is talking about? It's the joy that Jesus received because He knew that everyone that the Father chose would be saved because of what He was about to do. Hebrews 12:2 says that we should look to Jesus, who is the founder and perfecter of our faith. Because Jesus endured the cross, we are now saved when we receive Jesus Christ, and the Father has made us holy. That's why Jesus has such joy, even in the face of such suffering He had to endure. And for those of us that are saved, and those of us that will be saved, isn't it mind-boggling that we were chosen by the Father even before the beginning of time?

God's love for us extends for eternity. When we enter into the Body of Christ, we all become perfectly one. We as Christians should live in unity so that we can show the world the glory of Jesus Christ and the love of God. How does knowing that Jesus received joy when you were saved, change the way you think about salvation? Are you living in the Body of Christ like we all are perfectly one? Does the world see this in you and everyone else in your church?



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

## THE PRAYER IN THE GARDEN

Joe Ramos, English Pastor, East Bay Chinese Christian Revival Church, Castro Valley

*<sup>40</sup> Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping. "Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?" he asked Peter. <sup>41</sup> "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."*

(Matthew 26:40-41, NIV)

Why is it most of us ignore prayer? We wonder why God does not hear our prayers, our requests or petitions. We ask, why we are going through so much turmoil? In the place called Gethsemane, Jesus asked His disciples, "Stay awake and pray, so that you won't enter into temptation, the Spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41).

We cannot build a church without prayer." Unless the Lord builds a house, its builders labor over it in vain" (Psalm 127:1). We cannot fight the adversary without prayer. "For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces of evil (Ephesians 6:12). We cannot give others Jesus, unless we first have him in us, and that is not until we are bathed in prayer. "Whatever you ask in My name, I will do it so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13). Yet many of us do not understand that to come into communication with God is to develop a prayer life, a relationship with Him. But what do I say? It is an open conversation with God, with our maker, first in praise then in worship. Jesus had a hard time getting his disciples to stay with Him and pray but after the movement of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost things changed. We need to make some New Year's resolutions and put God first in our life and seek him in prayer. "Seek first the kingdom of God" (Matthew 6:33). We have to ask God for direction in our life and for strength to be used for His will, not our will. Jesus knew that He would be crucified, betrayed by one of His own followers yet He knew he was the ransom for our sins, the sacrificial lamb, "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). He did not want to take the cup but after much prayer and seeking His Father's face He was only able to do it after much prayer. The answer in all this is prayer. Do you "Got Prayer?"



THURSDAY, MARCH 12

## THE ONE I WILL KISS

Jerry Wong, Senior Pastor, Maranatha Bible Church, San Ramon

*<sup>44</sup> Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, "The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard." <sup>45</sup> And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, "Rabbi!" And he kissed him.*

(Mark 14:44-45, ESV)

"The one I will kiss" — The kiss is a greeting between intimate friends; foreign to our culture, yet very common in the near east. It is a show of affection and closeness. Of all the ways to identify Jesus for arrest, why this way? You would think everyone in Jerusalem would know who Jesus was. Couldn't Judas just point him out? The requirement to kiss Jesus could be because of a few possibilities. It was a spur of the moment decision and there wasn't enough time to prepare. Not likely since Judas approached the rulers early on and was waiting for an opportunity. It was very dark and the only way to clearly identify Jesus was to kiss him. If it wasn't too dark to see the kiss, it wouldn't have been too dark to point him out. This leaves a third and most troubling possibility. Judas was betraying his good friend in the most perverse way possible. This isn't just burning the bridge. It's burning the bridge, bombing the foundations, damming up the river and replacing the water with molten lava. This is a betrayal probably borne out of deep seated anger. This is an educated guess but given the options available to Judas and the amount of time he had to prepare, to do it this way inflicts the greatest pain upon Jesus than any other. Ever been betrayed by someone close to you in such a way that though the event is long past, the wound still throbs? Jesus knows how you feel. And in your great desire for justice, and even vengeance, would you look at His example? Jesus doesn't strike out. He lays His life in the hands of the Father. Why does He do this? You might say, well He's God in the flesh, He has that god-stuff so He can take it. Well the good news is that the god-stuff he has is ours as well — He's called the Holy Spirit. Jesus submitted to the Father because He knew that there will be a final judgment, a final settling of accounts. Because God is judge and all powerful, no injustice, no betrayal, will go unresolved. Ever been betrayed? Does the wound throb? Allow the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to bathe that wound and relieve the lingering pain. Relinquish your anger to the judge of all. His son will shortly be unjustly accused, tortured, and killed by the very people He set apart to be His special people. Ever been betrayed? Talk to Jesus about how He felt. Does the wound throb? Ask Him about His. And may Lenten Hope sustain you.



FRIDAY, MARCH 13

## BURNING BRIGHT AMIDST DARK CHAOS

Jason Chan, Associate Pastor, Youth Ministries, South Bay Chinese Gospel Church, Milpitas

*<sup>47</sup> While he [Jesus] was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people. <sup>48</sup> Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him." <sup>49</sup> Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. <sup>50</sup> Jesus replied, "Friend, do what you came for." Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. <sup>51</sup> With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. <sup>52</sup> "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. <sup>53</sup> Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? <sup>54</sup> But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" <sup>55</sup> At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. <sup>56</sup> But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.*

(Matthew 26:47-56, NIV)

We would expect Jesus to be discouraged or even frustrated by such succession of "unfortunate" events, Jesus being betrayed by his very own disciple (vv. 47-50), another disciple's gross failing to understand God's redemptive plan on the sufferings of Christ (vv. 51-54), and Jesus being personally abandoned by his own team in the coldness of that night (vv. 55-56). Given the darkness of such an evening, it would be easy for any leader to be paralyzed with a sense of failure. Yet amidst the chaos, Jesus shines with a confidence and peace that exudes for all of us to absorb; an unmatched sense of purpose that burns, even till his impending death at the cross. What is the secret of such fiery determination? The mystery is revealed through one of Jesus' earlier dialogue with his disciples, as recorded in John 16. In verse 32, Jesus claims, "But a time is coming, and has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me." Back then, Jesus anticipated correctly that times will be harsh, as evident later through both the betrayal and abandonment of Matthew 26. Yet Jesus thrives amidst such hardships, only because he takes comfort and healing in the faithfulness and presence of God, His Father. Are you feeling paralyzed with a sense of failure or wandering through a dark and confusing period in your life? Then surrender yourself through Jesus to the faithfulness and care of God, Your Father. His presence will re-ignite your soul.



SATURDAY, MARCH 14

## STAND UP AND BE COUNTED

Amos Lee, Rev., Chinese Independent Baptist Church, San Francisco

*<sup>15</sup> Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, <sup>16</sup> but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there and brought Peter in. <sup>17</sup> "You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not."*

(John 18:15-17, NIV)

"You are not one of his disciples, are you?" the girl at the door asked Peter. He replied, "I am not" (John 18:17).

This episode in the life of Simon Peter represents a low point in his journey of following Christ. Contrast this to when he boldly proclaimed to Jesus some days earlier when he said, "... I will lay down my life for you." (John 13:37b) And the sad thing is, it never struck Peter that he was going down the slippery slope of denying Christ. Before the night was over, he would deny the Lord two more times. This was despite the fact that the Lord had warned him that this was going to happen.

This is a very revealing truth about human nature in the face of external pressures that challenges our core beliefs. Just like Peter, we buckle when our exuberance and confidence is built upon the flimsy foundation of feelings and fear. Standing up for Christ and be counted makes us squirmy and uncomfortable, especially when thrust into an unpopular cause or when holding an unpopular point of view. We hate to stick out like a sore thumb. We want to be liked and to be in the "in" crowd, doing the "in thing." We fear what other people think of us or what they would do to us.

But there comes a time when we have to stand up for what we truly believe and to identify with those who hold those views. When that time comes, may we be able to stand tall knowing for sure "... the reason for the hope" that we have and not because of what others might like or dislike about us.

Lord, deliver me from the exuberance of the unexamined faith and the fear of not being liked.





SUNDAY, MARCH 15

## THE SILENT SERMON

James Shum, Pastor, Chinese Presbyterian Church of Oakland

<sup>60</sup> And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?” <sup>61</sup> But he was silent and made no answer. Again the high priest asked him, “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” <sup>62</sup> And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” <sup>63</sup> And the high priest tore his garments and said, “Why do we still need witnesses? <sup>64</sup> You have heard his blasphemy. What is your decision?” And they all condemned him as deserving death. <sup>65</sup> And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to strike him, saying to him, “Prophesy!” And the guards received him with blows.

(Mark 14:60-65, ESV)

Jesus stood in front of the high priest and the members of the Sanhedrin listening to their false accusations. He was in absolute silence. He did not defend himself. He looked so poor and helpless. Everyone was gazing at him, waiting to hear his words of defense. But Jesus did not open his mouth at all. Those accusations sound so strong they thought Jesus was going to lose the battle. There was no ground for him. The congregation was amazed at his silence. Jesus was not a weak person nor was he powerless. He knew who he was and his strong stance proves he is able to defend himself from those false accusations. Yet he was delivering a sermon in silence, a sermon without words which deeply engraved into the heart of those present and also for those who read his story today. This silent sermon reflects the following ideas. First, the truth stands forever and does not need any proof. We know that the sun rises from the east and we do not need any proof. Movement of the heavenly bodies has their orbs that prove they are acts of God. Why we need to prove that Jesus is the Son of God? Second, God gives us a conscience and free will to choose the right from wrong. You may accuse Jesus or accept him as your Lord and Savior. Third, God is “I Am” but people do not believe in that, even the high priest took that confession “I Am” as the grounds to sentence Jesus to death. Jesus is “I Am” do you believe in Him?



MONDAY, MARCH 16

## THE PROCESS OF BEING RESTORED

Darren Lim, Associative Pastor, East Bay Alliance Church, Oakland

<sup>60</sup> Peter replied, “Man, I don’t know what you’re talking about!” Just as he was speaking, the rooster crowed. <sup>61</sup> The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word the Lord had spoken to him: “Before the rooster crows today, you will disown me three times.”

(Luke 22:60-61, NIV)

When we think of Peter, we tend to think of him as the disciple who denied Jesus, but the question we must also ask is, where were the other disciples? Wasn’t their absence an act of denial as well? Are there not times we all deny Him in similar ways as well? Read this poem and see how true it is for us:

*“When I am too busy to pray,  
I deny that you are the center of my life.  
When I neglect your Word,  
I deny that you are competent to guide me.  
When I worry,  
I deny that you are Lord of my circumstances.”*

As we look at Peter, we should not be hard on him and we should not be hard on ourselves either. Jesus looks at us the same way He did Peter, one filled with sincerity and compassion.

Warren Wiersbe writes, “Each one of us, at one time or another, will fail the Lord and then hear (in one way or another) “the cock crowed.” Satan will tell us that we are finished, that our future has been destroyed, but that is not God’s message to us. It was certainly not the end for Peter! His restoration was so complete that he was able to say to the Jews, “You disowned the Holy and Righteous One!” (Acts 3:14) Peter did not have 1 John 1:9 to read, but he did experience it in his own heart.”

Sometime after this incident, Jesus restored His repentant disciple and gave Peter a great responsibility (John 21). Peter became useful again, but it was a lesson on forgiveness and restoration he will never forget. As we enter this season of Lent, maybe there is something you may need to confess in order to have a right relationship with Him.



TUESDAY, MARCH 17

## THE ANSWER WE LONG TO HEAR

Johnson Chiu, Pastor, Dr., Faith Walk Community Church, San Ramon  
Asian Director, The Leadership Connection, Concord  
Coordinator, Equipping Resource Center, ISAAC, Castro Valley

*<sup>66</sup> At daybreak the council of the elders of the people, both the chief priests and teachers of the law, met together, and Jesus was led before them. <sup>67</sup> “If you are the Christ,” they said, “tell us.” Jesus answered, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, <sup>68</sup> and if I asked you, you would not answer. <sup>69</sup> But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” <sup>70</sup> They all asked, “Are you then the Son of God?” He replied, “You are right in saying I am.” <sup>71</sup> Then they said, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.”*

(Luke 22:66-71, NIV)

The chief priests and teachers of the law should know better. Drowned by their own self-interests and protective of their own agendas, they test Jesus rather than trust him. He does not fit their picture of a messiah. To them he is a mere man, lowly, without rank, position or power, a carpenter gone amok, meddling in religious issues he has no business. “If you are the Christ, tell us” they demand of Jesus. The question is not backed by honest inquiry but filled with doubt, disdain and deception. They wait for what they want to hear not what they need to hear; they long for his answer, in order to accuse and self-validate.

Jesus knows the duplicity of their hearts, “If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer.” He is gracious, answers plainly and offers a glimpse of his identity, “But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God.” If they believed this, then they truly would have understood. As it is, they pounce on his statement and accusingly ask again, “Are you then the Son of God?” Giving them another opportunity to believe, he answers, “You are right in saying I am.”

At this, the attributing of God’s Name, “I Am” to him, they jump up and together shout, “Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips.” Ironically, the words they want to hear are the ones we need to hear; these are the words we have longed to hear! Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips! “You are right in saying I am!”



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

## SORRY ISN'T ENOUGH

Eugene Chu, Pastor, Coffee Talk at Chinese Church in Christ, Milpitas

<sup>3</sup> When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders.

<sup>4</sup> “I have sinned,” he said, “for I have betrayed innocent blood.” “What is that to us?” they replied. “That’s your responsibility.” <sup>5</sup> So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

(Matthew 27:3-5, NIV)

I can relate to Judas. As a parent, I am seized with remorse all the time. Just recently, I asked our daughter (age 9) one Sunday afternoon if she had finished her homework assignments and projects. I asked her to check her notebook to make sure that everything was finished. She confidently said, “It’s all done, Daddy.” I was happy to hear her words, knowing that we could then have a relaxing Sunday evening before the beginning of the school week. At about 9 pm, her bedtime, my girl comes into our home office where my wife and I are peacefully surfing the net. She said, “Daddy, I didn’t finish half of my project, and it’s due tomorrow.” You know the feeling when your blood slowly begins to boil and you start to feel tension rising? Well, that didn’t happen that evening. Instead, I just exploded. I shouted at her, repeating the obvious. “You just told me this afternoon that you had finished everything! You just told me!” Tears welled up in her eyes. Her little brother and sidekick (age 4) was standing next to her, looking terrified and confused. They both ran from the room. I was angry, but simultaneously regretful of what I had done - yelled at the very ones I love. Why is it so easy to lose my temper around my kids? Why is it easier to be angry with them than to love them? About ten minutes later, I went over to them and apologized. “I’m sorry I lost my temper.” With that, their faces turned from tears and fear to a sigh of relief. “That’s okay, Daddy.”

When I read about Judas, I am saddened that he hanged himself. Was Judas sorry for what he had done? Did he regret betraying the Lord Jesus Christ, the teacher he had spent the last three years of his life with? Of course he did. But his remorse did not include repentance. He felt sorry but he did not make it right. His actions were the fulfillment of prophesy, but our lives — your life and mine — can have a different outcome. In Christ, there is enough grace and mercy to go around. To repent AND to make things right in life can result in something better, like instant forgiveness from a sweet nine year old girl.



THURSDAY, MARCH 19

## PATIENT EXPECTATION

Kenny Chan, English Pastor, Chinese For Christ Church of San Jose

*<sup>33</sup> Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” <sup>34</sup> “Is that your own idea,” Jesus asked, “or did others talk to you about me?” <sup>35</sup> “Am I a Jew?” Pilate replied. “It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” <sup>36</sup> Jesus said, “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.” <sup>37</sup> “You are a king, then!” said Pilate. Jesus answered, “You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me.” <sup>38</sup> “What is truth?” Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and said, “I find no basis for a charge against him.*

(John 18:33-38, NIV)

In the passage above (John 18:33-38), Jesus is standing before Pilate, the Roman governor and being questioned by him. I’ve often thought about Jesus’ response to Pilate’s question in verses 33-34. Why didn’t Jesus just come right out and answer his question directly and say something like, “Yes, you are correct! I am a King.” This would be a perfect evangelistic opportunity or lead in to sharing the ‘Four Spiritual Laws’ with Pilate. Of course, this says nothing to the fact that Jesus’ life is on the line and how He responds will help impact whether He lives or dies. If my life were “on the line” I might be tempted to respond in such a way that would benefit my case the most. Yet, Jesus doesn’t do that. He essentially throws Pilate’s initial question (v. 33) back at him (v. 34). You might say that Jesus wants Pilate to come to his own conclusion (conviction?) concerning who He is (i.e. His identity) rather than simply parroting back to Him something that he’s been told. For myself, particularly in times of distress or confusion, I want the “easy or quick” answer from God. I just want God to clearly (and quickly) tell me which way to go; which choice to choose, or which job to take. I scream and cry out, “Just give me the answer God.” Yet, perhaps at those times that God “steps back” and is “purposely silent” because He may want to see how serious and sincere I am in my trust in Him. Yes, He could tell me what to do, where to go, or who to see yet He chooses not to or in the way/timing I may want. Perhaps God might be choosing to “remain silent” towards us to deepen our understanding and faith in Him. Can we continue to trust Him and lean upon Him even when His response isn’t as quick or in the way we might like?



FRIDAY, MARCH 20

## WHO'S YOUR FRIEND?

Peter Fong, Pastor, The Joint Fellowship, Chinese Church in Christ, Cupertino

*<sup>6</sup> On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. <sup>7</sup> When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. <sup>8</sup> When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. <sup>9</sup> He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. <sup>10</sup> The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. <sup>11</sup> Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. <sup>12</sup> That day Herod and Pilate became friends — before this they had been enemies.*

(Luke 23:6-12, NIV)

It has been said that if you want to become a friend to someone you don't get along with, "find a common enemy the two of you dislike even more." In the case of Herod and Pilate, their common enemy was Jesus. In a short three years, this Galilean caused them more headaches with the people they ruled over than they cared to deal with in their lifetimes. Both Herod and Pilate represent the powers of this world we live in. Though these powers are often in opposition to each other, they are somehow able to find friendship in dealing with their common foes, Christ and His followers. This is why Jesus forewarned His disciples before His death, "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first" (John 15:18). Today's passage gives us a picture of just how much this world and all the powers that work behind its scenes hate Jesus. They were without a shred of evidence to incriminate Jesus. They had no reason to punish Him in any shape or form. Having no cause, why would anyone mistreat an innocent man? The only answer is hatred. As we prepare to celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord, we are reminded today of what got Him to the cross in the first place — hatred. The world hates Jesus and anyone who is associated with Him. If the world hates us, why do we so desperately want to be, and so easily become, friends with it? The world will never embrace us. If anything, we must prepare to be ridiculed and mocked vehemently. And if we, like Jesus, are to die by their hands, we have this glorious hope — to be raised like Jesus in our own resurrection.

"Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4).



SATURDAY, MARCH 21

## AVOIDING BEING CHRISTIAN

Eric Segawa, Volunteer Chaplain, Highland Hospital, Oakland

<sup>24</sup> *So Pilate decided to grant their demand.*

(Luke 23:24, NIV)

I avoid confrontation. Being Asian this is culturally commonplace. I make the effort to employ relational finesse when disconnects arise; I've seen this in my parents and others whom I respect. Arguing is rarely a good thing. But being Christian is more than being Relationally Correct; it is following Christ, who handed Pilate an opportunity to stand for integrity or to appease the masses and avoid an uncomfortable confrontation. More than I care to admit, I can relate to Pilate who was politically astute but spiritually timid. Pilate's choice was not one of faith but one of packaged expediency. The Lord gives us similar choices every week.

In private the boss gets unfairly and unconstructively criticized and the Lord hands us the opportunity to make a difference by what we say or don't say, and how we say it. We can take a stand for Christ by confronting attitudes that are not of the Lord, attitudes that also drag down the workplace that can subtly resemble the mob that demanded to crucify Jesus. Faith rises above culture, personal preferences and public circumstances. This faith results in courage that confronts in the name of Jesus who confronted Pilate and the cross.

Looking to Jesus who looked beyond the mob, Pilate and personal preferences, we are to look beyond the stress of confrontation to see the faith that takes a stand for Christ.



SUNDAY, MARCH 22

## LOVE AS REACTION TO EXPEDIENCY

Paul Nagano, Dr., Council For Pacific Asian Theology, Alhambra

*<sup>24</sup> When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, he took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!" <sup>25</sup> All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" <sup>26</sup> Then he released Barabbas to them. But he had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.*

(Matthew 27:24-26, NIV)

The reality of our pragmatic culture is expediency: doing what is convenient for the movement whether moral or immoral — just or unjust. In our scriptural text (Matthew 27:24-27) the Roman ruler, Pilate, did the expedient thing: "washed his hands" of the innocent Jesus. Pilate confessed his own innocence "I am innocent of this man's blood". Pilate claimed his own innocence, but took no serious attention to the innocence of the victim, Jesus. The expedient crowd responded in the same manner and did the expedient thing. They reacted, not with justice and honesty, but with expediency as they consented to what was seemingly popular-the response of the crowd. To justify his conscience and action, Pilate released Barabbas, and had the innocent Jesus scourged and delivered to be crucified.

Our Lenten message is not only the expediency of Pilate and the crowd, but the reaction of Jesus, when he said: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34). Perhaps the most difficult and greatest act of love is to forgive your enemy(s). Let alone to forgive at the expense of suffering and death. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man laid down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

We live in a culture that is charged with expediency. With the rapidity of our involvements we are all victims of expediency. We are tempted to do what we need to do right away in the most convenient way without giving much thought whether it is right or wrong, helpful or harmful, gracious or immediate.

May we learn to prayerfully make our decisions and lovingly forgive those who may wrong us by their thoughtlessness and expedencies.





MONDAY, MARCH 23

## PASSION CHECK

Jay Thompson, English Pastor, San Jose Canaan Christian Church, San Jose

<sup>16</sup> The soldiers led Jesus away into the palace (that is, the Praetorium) and called together the whole company of soldiers. <sup>17</sup> They put a purple robe on him, then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on him. <sup>18</sup> And they began to call out to him, "Hail, king of the Jews!" <sup>19</sup> Again and again they struck him on the head with a staff and spit on him. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him.

(Mark 15:16-19, NIV)

Jesus was mocked. He was in the place of judgment. He stood before an entire battalion of soldiers, ready for command. He was adorned with the colors of royalty and the symbol of a crown. He was saluted as if commander-in-chief. He was bowed before as if given highest honor. Jesus was in his rightful place, but none recognized him.

It was not for lack of passion that Jesus was humiliated in this way. Jewish nationalism was behind his arrest. Roman nationalism was behind his mockery. The soldiers had seen all the pomp of Roman pageantry and Jesus was no fit. Zeal for the doing the right thing was everywhere. Zeal for the emperor of Rome set Jesus up in this way.

What is your passion? On what is the focus of your zeal? Is it based on knowledge? Is it based on understanding? There is only one thing worthy of our passion and zeal: Jesus Christ. The one mocked in all passion and zeal is the only one thing worthy of real worship.

It's time to check our passion focus. We may be passionate about some good things: The nation of Israel, The Empire of Rome, The United States of America, and The American Dream but what if our passion for a good thing led us to passionately miss out on the one true worthy thing? What if our passion has blinded us to the fact that we in all of our zeal are mocking our very Lord and King?

Passion check: Recognize who the true king is. Put the colors and crown on the one true king. Worship the King.



TUESDAY, MARCH 24

## AT THE CROSSROAD OF LIFE

Andrew Lee, Rev., Dr., Eastern Regional Director, ISAAC, New York

*<sup>20</sup> And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him out to crucify him. <sup>21</sup> A certain man from Cyrene, Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they forced him to carry the cross.*

(Mark 15:20-21, NIV)

With great brevity, Mark paints the fate of Jesus. After a night of mockery and torture, the soldiers are finished toying with him. The king of the Jews is stripped of his “royal robe” and led to the slaughter. He is seemingly powerless to resist, at the mercy of their diabolical whim and fancy.

Is Jesus now so weakened from his ordeal that he is unable to carry his own cross? Sleepless, beaten, wounded and bleeding, he falters after taking several steps. The Roman soldiers note his condition and conscript a passerby named Simon to help.

On his part, Simon of Cyrene was probably in Jerusalem intending to celebrate the Passover. Instead he is forced into menial and humiliating labor to carry the cross of a stranger condemned to crucifixion.

What happened on that short journey to Golgotha was life changing for Simon. We have no record of any interaction between Jesus and Simon, no witnesses to any exchange they may have had. But it is significant that Matthew, Mark and Luke all report what Simon did.

Mark writes to his audience with an air of familiarity about Simon. “He is the father of Rufus and Alexander.” There is the implication that the Christian community is well acquainted with this family because they, too, follow Jesus. Simon did not volunteer to carry Jesus’ cross. He was forced to do so. But when he did, it became life changing for him and for his family.

Jesus calls us to deny ourselves and to carry His cross (Luke 14:27). We are not compelled to do so by some outside force as Simon was. It must come from a voluntary offering of our heart. Might it be life changing when we do?



WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

## THE RIGHT COMPANY

Joshua Lee, English Pastor, Chinese for Christ, Hayward

<sup>32</sup> *Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed.*

<sup>33</sup> *When they came to the place called the Skull, there they crucified him.*

(Luke 23:32-33a, NIV)

People are known by the company they keep. That's partly why parents are concerned about their kids' friends, why the workplace is filled with office politics and shifting alliances, why we gravitate to people with common interests. We want to be surrounded by "the right people." Perhaps you feel, "that's not me." Consider for a moment, who do you prefer to spend time with and who do you avoid? Why? We all have conscious and unconscious filters for who we want around us (your time and energy are limited) and what their company says about us.

Jesus has a funny view of "the right people." In this passage, our attention is directed to how His company shifts from insiders (who think they don't need Messiah) to outsiders, criminals. If replacing the murderous Barabbas and the form of execution are any hint, Jesus is being thrown in with society's worst, deemed unworthy to live. But no armed guard or mob forces Him to identify with criminals (cf. 22:37); He chooses to lay down His life (cf. John 10:14-18), to seek the company of the broken, the lost, the sinful (cf. Luke 5:31-32; 19:10). The Holy One, who breathed all Creation into existence and before whom even kings and angels bow, sees all who rebel against Him, criminals deserving a death sentence before God, and chooses to be with them. You are that criminal; so am I.

What's the best part? This Humble King not only associates with us, He faces death with us at a place called "the Skull;" though blameless, He's crucified alongside transgressors like us. He willingly suffers and dies to restore real life to us.

Jesus is picky about the company He keeps. He picks people like you and me, death row criminals, and meets us where we are.



THURSDAY, MARCH 26

## JESUS IS KING

Jonathan Lau, Associate Pastor, San Francisco Chinese Alliance Church

<sup>19</sup> Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. <sup>20</sup> Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. <sup>21</sup> The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." <sup>22</sup> Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

(John 19:19-22, NIV)

In life, there are times when things just seem to crash and pile up. Work gets heavy. The kids are sick. Loved ones pass away. Even ministry and church become stressful. It's in those times that life may seem to be out of your control ... out of anybody's control. Loneliness and helplessness set in. It even feels like God disappears. During this Lent season, we've been following the arrest, trial, and eventual crucifixion of Jesus. And if there was any time in our Lord's life that things seemed out of control, this would be it. Christ appears to be utterly helpless as the envycrazed Jewish leadership beat him, subject him to a sham of a Sanhedrin trial, and ship him off to Pilate the Roman governor for a politically-coerced death sentence. In the midst of all this, Pilate decides to mock the Jewish leaders by inscribing a note fastened to Jesus' cross stating: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. What the governor meant as mockery becomes for us a stunning reminder that even in the midst of all the chaos, Jesus is indeed King and in total control. He may be silent, but He is in command. They may beat Him, but only because He allows it. They will kill Him, but He will bring it all to a grand conclusion for the benefit of humanity to the glory of God. Jesus was King during His crucifixion and He is still King even during chaotic, troubled periods in your life. And you can trust Him for He lives and loves you deeply. Jesus guides us, comes alongside, and even carries us when we are weak and tired. One of my favorite illustrations of Jesus is Jesus as our Shepherd: Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me. (Psalm 23:4)

Jesus the Shepherd-King is in control and most of all, He is with you. He is always ready to comfort, ready to protect, ready to strengthen, and always ready to walk with you, even at the roughest times in life. He was in control of the most "chaotic" time in His life, so how much more will He be with yours?



FRIDAY, MARCH 27

## THE GOD WHO KNOWS SUFFERING

Eugene Chu, Pastor, Coffee Talk at Chinese Church in Christ, Milpitas

*<sup>39</sup> Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads <sup>40</sup> and saying, “You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!” <sup>41</sup> In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. <sup>42</sup> “He saved others,” they said, “but he can’t save himself! He’s the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. <sup>43</sup> He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God.’ ” <sup>44</sup> In the same way the robbers who were crucified with him also heaped insults on him.*

(Matthew 27:39-44, NIV)

This passage leaves me in a state of disbelief every time I read it. If they only knew who Jesus really was — the Son of God, the Messiah! Jesus should be worshiped and adored, the mightiest super hero who came to save the world. Instead, the leaders of that day — priests, teachers, and elders — hurled insults and ridiculed Jesus. How did that make Jesus feel?

In recent years, I have learned about human trafficking of young girls in Thailand. Ruthless slave traders seek out poor, rural villages to offer families money and promise a better future for their young daughters. They deceitfully offer girls work in restaurants but instead send them to brothels to work for low wages, if any. When they become HIV positive, they are thrown into the street, unwanted because they are worthless to the brothel owners. What is the worth of a young girl? Doesn't she also bear the image of God? I am saddened and enraged knowing this still happens everyday.

When I read this passage, I am reminded that Jesus understands. He not only understands because he is God, but he understands because he was humiliated and tortured and treated less than a human. One day, there will be justice for those young women. In the meantime, we are reminded that we worship a God who understands what it is like to be treated as worthless. We worship a God who experienced suffering as a human being. Thank you, Jesus, for knowing what it's like to hurt.



SATURDAY, MARCH 28

## THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CROSS

Dana Chau, Campus Minister, NorCal Regional Director,  
Asian American Christian Fellowship, Los Angeles

*<sup>39</sup> One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" <sup>40</sup> But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? <sup>41</sup> We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."  
<sup>42</sup> Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." <sup>43</sup> Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

(Luke 23:39-43, NIV)

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus said to one of the thieves who were also crucified, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise." Jesus didn't die between a good man and a bad man. He didn't promise paradise to a good man. He promised paradise to the sinner who humbly asked.

Two important words we must not miss. The first word is "truth." The promise of paradise to those who ask is based on truth. Not wish; not hearsay; not religion but truth. The second word is "me." That is Jesus Christ. You could not be in paradise without Christ. The place would not be paradise without Christ.

A story is told of a thief who robbed John Wesley. While the thief walked away, Wesley shouted, "If you should someday come to your senses and know what you have done is wrong, turn to God for forgiveness through Jesus Christ."

If we have the promise of Heaven, because we belong to Jesus, then every situation in our lives is an opportunity to bring others into Heaven with us. Jesus' crucifixion was not a tragedy but a triumph of God and a triumph for mankind. Through Christ's suffering, death and resurrection, God demonstrated His power, provision and preeminence to rescue us from our sin and to restore us to Him.



SUNDAY, MARCH 29

## SUNDAY'S COMING

Jerry Wong, Senior Pastor, Maranatha Bible Church, San Ramon

*<sup>33</sup> And when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. <sup>34</sup> And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?" which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" <sup>35</sup> And some of the bystanders hearing it said, "Behold, he is calling Elijah." <sup>36</sup> And someone ran and filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed and gave it to him to drink, saying, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to take him down." <sup>37</sup> And Jesus uttered a loud cry and breathed his last.*

(Mark 15:33-37, ESV)

Those of us who are a bit more mature (read that as old) have probably entertained thoughts of how we will leave this earth (read that as die). Ideally, it would be as uncomplicated as possible, pain free, and surrounded by loved ones. We have probably seen others go before us. Most die well. Every occasion is sad, but how many have been disturbing? The gospel invites us to witness the last breaths of a dying man. Though it is definitely a sad occasion, it is far too disturbing, and too far outside our ideal. Like every movie death scene we've watched, there is a great darkness that deepens the already dark mood. This darkness however, is not some Hollywood special effect. The skies darken for three hours as if the sun had to hide itself from this terrible sight. And what a sight it was — a lone voice screaming out of the darkness, lamenting the abandonment of God. Where was the solace and comfort at these final moments on earth? Where were the loved ones? Where was God? This was the spectacle that a horrified creation witnessed. Except for a notable few in the natural and supernatural realms, the majority held their breaths in shocked silence. How could God allow His son to die? How could He let Him die in this way, all alone and bereft of the nearness of His father? Immanuel is robbed of His namesake. Watch and wonder. Watch and weep. God dies a man and man is free. He dies our death so we may live His life. There is a reason and a purpose for all of this ugliness and sorrow. We may not fathom it now, nor may we ever. But this much is true and the ultimate reason for our Lenten Hope. It's Friday. It's only Friday. Sunday's coming (with much thanks and admiration to Tony Campolo).



MONDAY, MARCH 30

## NO MORE SEPARATION

Bruce Wong, Pastor, Cumberland Peninsula Community Church, Millbrae

*<sup>51</sup> At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. <sup>52</sup> The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. <sup>53</sup> They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people. <sup>54</sup> When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"*

(Matthew 27:51-54, NIV)

When Jesus died, we talk a lot about the darkness that came over the land and the centurion who exclaimed, "Surely He was the Son of God!" But little is said about the splitting of the curtain in the Temple and the opening of the tombs.

Both the curtain and the tombs represented two barriers that we cannot cross, two reminders of our limitations. The Temple curtain reminds us that our sin separates us from the holy God. Only the High Priest could go inside to the Holy of Holies; everyone else had to wait on the outside. Sinful men (all of us) were forbidden to come before the Lord on their own. Consider the plight of Uzzah in 2 Samuel 6:6-7.

The grave reminds us of our finiteness and of the consequences of our sin. Ezekiel 18:4 tells us that the soul that sins will die. Since we all sin, we all will die. The cemeteries are full of stark reminders that, regardless of what kinds of empires we build while we walk this earth, our days are still numbered. No matter how much better and longer we try to make our lives, it will never be enough. We will still be imperfect and we will still have to pay the penalty for our sin.

But by opening the curtain and the graves were opened after Jesus died, He tore down the two barriers that keep us from God: our sin and its consequences. Jesus did what we could never do, to bring us to the loving and forgiving God whom we never deserved, and by a power and love that we will never understand.





TUESDAY, MARCH 31  
(DOUBLE DEVOTIONAL #1)

## HOW ARE YOU GOING TO WELCOME JESUS' COMING?

Christine Ang, Pastor, Burmese Christian Family Fellowship of Bay Area Church, Daly City

*<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. <sup>35</sup> The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," <sup>37</sup> and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."*

(John 19:33-37, NIV)

In John 19:33-37, Jesus and the twelve disciples ate the Passover meal, the Last Supper, on Thursday evening. That night, Jesus prayed earnestly on the Mount of Olives and then He was arrested because of Judas' betrayal. On Friday, Jesus was crucified. The next day was to be a special Sabbath and the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath. With the authority of Pilate, the soldiers broke the legs of the men who had been crucified with Jesus. But they did not break Jesus' legs because they found Him already dead and so they pierced His side. Jesus' unbroken bones and pierced side were fulfillment of Old Testament predictions.

1. The Jews were instructed by Moses that the Passover lamb's bones should not be broken. When the Romans failed to break the bones of Jesus, they were fulfilling scriptures because Jesus was the personification of the Passover lamb (see Exodus 12:46, Numbers 9:12, and Psalm 34:20).
2. When the Romans pierced Jesus' side, they were also fulfilling scriptures. The Romans in this case represented the whole human race. Because all human beings except for Christ are born in sin (the Adamic nature), by default we all pierced Jesus on the cross. So, when Jesus comes back, those who will be left behind because they rejected Jesus will be the ones looking " ... on the one they have pierced" (Zechariah 12:10 and Psalm 22:16). We, who have accepted Jesus as Lord will rise up to be with Him. The Jews who refused to believe in Jesus will be the ones who will mourn the deepest because as a people group, they would have missed the First and Second Coming of their Messiah.



TUESDAY, MARCH 31  
(DOUBLE DEVOTIONAL #2)

## PROMISES, PROMISES

Kevin Kan, Pastor, Fellowship Bible Church, Belmont

*<sup>33</sup> But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. <sup>34</sup> Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. <sup>35</sup> The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. <sup>36</sup> These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," <sup>37</sup> and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced."*

(John 19:33-37, NIV)

When I was a child, I really wanted a boys' bike with a banana seat really bad. It seemed that every boy (not a correct assumption) at school had a banana seat bike except me. My parents had taught me to ride a bike on the same bike my older sister learned on. It was a used, rusty, beaten up blue Schwinn one speed. I was so ashamed to ride that old girls' bike. Many times at the local department store, I'd longingly look at the new bikes and wished that I could get one. I'd ask often, but they never made a promise to get me a new bike and I never did receive one, though I had hoped every birthday and Christmas.

My hope, no matter how positive or sincere, was not founded on a promise or guaranteed by anyone. In contrast, God has given man a 100% guarantee to life's greatest gift, eternal life. He promised a Savior who would redeem mankind. The promise would be fulfilled, but the process would be a difficult one and predicted quite in detail. The common practice was to break the legs of those executed on the cross to expedite death. They didn't need to break Christ's legs which fulfilled God's Word (Ex. 12:46 and Num. 9:12) that the bones of the Lamb should not be broken. Then the guards pierced His side to ensure death (Zech. 12:10). The whole crucifixion was predicted (Ps. 22:16) by God a thousand years before Christ came to earth.

His promises are clear and will come to pass. If you can trust Him to fulfill His Word in detail, can't you trust Him in every detail of your life? Our hope isn't in wishful thinking, but in the solid promises of God.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

## COURAGEOUS FAITH AND PRACTICAL LOVE ACTION

Paul Nagano, Dr., Council For Pacific Asian Theology, Alhambra

*<sup>42</sup> It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, <sup>43</sup> Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. <sup>44</sup> Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. <sup>45</sup> When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph.*

(Mark 15:42-45, NIV)

Most Asian Americans are either shy or find it difficult to question authority. But two behavior patterns are revelations of genuine faith: courage and love-action. In our scripture text, Joseph of Arimathea evidenced his genuine faith by his courage and action: he courageously had an encounter with the highest local authority, Pilate representing the Roman Empire, and asked a very courageous question-he asked for the body of Jesus, who was crucified as a criminal. In such a situation, it would be very difficult for any person to ask for the body of a humble and insignificant criminal, but this indicates the courageous faith of Joseph. From a practical point of view, such a request would be foolish and unpopular, but Joseph had faith that this man, "despised and rejected" Jesus, had something to do with the kingdom of God (v.43). Not only did this express Joseph's courageous faith, it witnessed to his genuine faith as he expressed his love with courageous action. What would he do with a dead body? We would think it would be a very strange and unpopular thing to ask for a dead body. Joseph has no knowledge of the resurrection of Jesus. In practical love together with his discernment that Jesus was an innocent and good man, he wanted to express his honest intuitive faith and expressed his love by this unusual request and loving action. We often overlook some of the characters mentioned in the Bible, but here we see what courageous faith and love-in-action is all about. Hardly mentioned in the Bible and known in history, but this Joseph is a great witness of what genuine faith is all about.

You may be thought "crazy" or out of line, but we live in a day when it takes courage to be a follower of Jesus with actions of genuine love to authenticate what we believe.



THURSDAY, APRIL 2

## GOD USES OUR DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS

Ryan Schindler, English Pastor, San Francisco Swatow Christian Church, San Francisco

<sup>39</sup> He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds.

<sup>40</sup> Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. <sup>41</sup> At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. <sup>42</sup> Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

(John 19:39-42, NIV)

God often uses people's unique backgrounds and positions in life to accomplish His work and purposes. In John 19 God used two unlikely men to oversee the burial of Jesus. The prophet Isaiah had prophesied hundreds of years before that God's messiah would die a criminal's death, but end up buried in a rich man's tomb. Joseph's wealth was used for God's purposes when he had purchased this tomb in advance for himself and his family, but instead used it to bury Jesus. His crucifixion had been ordered by the Sanhedrin which was the Jewish ruling council that was led by the high priest and was made up of members who were high ranking Jewish priest's elders. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were members of the Sanhedrin and they were also secret disciples of Jesus. Previously Nicodemus had cautiously approached Jesus at night out of fear of what his colleagues would think of him. Although secret discipleship is not encouraged in the Bible, God used these two men from the council that had ordered the death of Jesus in order to give him the burial fit for a king and to add to the credibility of the resurrection. The Sanhedrin later sought to discredit the resurrection by claiming his body had been stolen by his disciples. If any of the eleven disciples had been given the body, the fact of the resurrection may have forever been viewed with suspicion. These men stepped out in faith to be publicly identified with Jesus and their actions have added validity to the resurrection and fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah. They likely had little idea of the significance of their actions or appreciated that God had put them in positions that were perfect to accomplish something great in history. Today God still uses our positions in life, our skills, occupations, and unique relationships we have to accomplish His work. How can you step out in faith to be used by Him?



FRIDAY, APRIL 3

## JESUS — OUR POWERFUL GOD

Vicky Chia, Executive Pastor, Hope Evangelical Free Church, San Francisco

*<sup>61</sup> Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. <sup>62</sup> The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. <sup>63</sup> “Sir,” they said, “we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, ‘After three days I will rise again.’ <sup>64</sup> So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first.” <sup>65</sup> “Take a guard,” Pilate answered. “Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.” <sup>66</sup> So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.*

(Matthew 27:61-66, NIV)

After Jesus was crucified, he was buried in a tomb. This burial brought finality and should have been the end of the story. However, the Pharisees and Chief Priests still tried to employ human efforts to make sure that Jesus was really put away and He had no more influence on His followers. Therefore, with Pilate’s approval, they secured the tomb by sending guards and putting a seal on the stone. They thought that by doing so, no disciple of Jesus would be able to steal Jesus’ body and lie that Jesus had been raised from the dead. Just as Jesus said, he rose from the dead after three days! He fulfilled his promise to rise in three days and He accomplished this by His own power and not by human effort or human intervention. Even the guards, the huge stone that blocked the opening of the tomb, and the seal on the stone could not hold Jesus in the tomb because He did not belong there. He belonged in Heaven with His Father. Jesus showed to the world that He is a powerful God.

In this passage, we also see a contrast of emotions. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary sat by the tomb because of their love for Jesus. They followed along with Jesus in His ministry even to the end. The fear that caused the disciples to flee was not found in them. On the other hand, the Pharisees and Chief Priests expressed fear — fear of the Word from Jesus, fear that the disciples would come and steal Jesus’ body, and fear that Jesus would continue to have impact in people’s lives.

When we believe in the Person of Christ and His Words, there is no fear, only love.



SATURDAY, APRIL 4

## SUDDEN DEATH AND NEW LIFE

Steve Quen, Senior Pastor, Bay Area Bible Church, San Leandro

*<sup>1</sup> After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. <sup>2</sup> There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. <sup>4</sup> The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.' Now I have told you." <sup>8</sup> So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.*

(Matthew 28:1-8, NIV)

These past few months have left four of our church families in shock and mourning and four others in great joy. Four church families have had a parent suddenly pass away. One family had a joyful Christmas eve dinner only to have the loved one in ICU on Christmas day and then go home with the Lord the next day. In another family, the loved one had just seen the doctor in early December and was told the loved one was in better health than ever, only to have them go to be with the Lord before Christmas. Yet during this same time frame it has also been a time of great joy, with at four families having newborns. New life has brought hope and happiness to these families. Our church family has experienced this mix of sudden death bringing sadness and new life bringing joy.

This passage is about that first Easter Sunday; the disciples were in shock, sadness and had lost all hope because of the sudden and cruel death of their leader and friend, Jesus. Yet as two of them approached the tomb, they heard the words from an angel, "He is not here; he has risen, just as he said", not just words of hope, but the description of that which never had happened in the world, the Son of God, the Son of Man would die, but come back to life never to die. This event, the resurrection of Jesus Christ, would change their mourning into joy, and this same joy and hope is available for us today, whether the testing we face is the death of a loved one or whatever test we experience in this life, because as the angel said "He has risen from the dead."



SUNDAY, APRIL 5

## OUR GREAT REASON TO PRAISE

Kenny Chan, English Pastor, Chinese For Christ Church of San Jose

*<sup>2</sup> So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"*

*<sup>15</sup> "Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?" Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him." <sup>16</sup> Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher). <sup>17</sup> Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'" <sup>18</sup> Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her.*

(John 20:2, 15-18, NIV)

In the passage in John 20:2, 15-18, we see the disciples' reaction and response to the news that His body "had been taken" (v. 2) and His appearing to Mary (v. 16-18). In terms of emotions and feelings, you could say they go from one extreme to the other like a pendulum: extreme sadness and grief (over His death), disbelief and bewilderment (over His missing body/empty tomb), and praise and joy (over His resurrection) all within a short period of time. Our church celebrated the Communion or the Lord's Supper recently. Communion is a time of remembering Christ's death on the cross yet rejoicing over His resurrection. I've noticed when our church celebrates Communion, it tends to be a rather somber event. It is a very serious event and should not be taken lightly. In fact, Paul warns us not to take the Lord's Supper flippantly (1 Cor. 12:27-28). Yet, it is also a time of celebration and rejoicing over Christ's victory over death and offers us new life in Him! That fact alone should fill us with great praise and lasting joy in our lives. However, one Christian author likens the atmosphere in some churches when they serve Communion to be "more like a funeral service of a fallen comrade than a celebration of the risen LORD." Let's not just celebrate Communion but more importantly, live our lives; let our lives be characterized by great joy and praise. Would others describe us as joyful or, would they instead use words like "serious, somber, and sober?" If you're a follower of Christ, no matter what else might be happening in your life, you have reason to celebrate and rejoice because of your salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. That alone is enough to give God the loudest shout of praise!



MONDAY, APRIL 6

## HOPE REQUIRES EVIDENCE

Dana Chau, Campus Minister, NorCal Regional Director,  
Asian American Christian Fellowship, Los Angeles

*<sup>11</sup> but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb <sup>12</sup> and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot. <sup>13</sup> They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?" "They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." <sup>14</sup> At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.*

(John 20:11-14, NIV)

We live with different hopes. Hope for acceptance. Hope for an improved marriage or family relationship. Hope for job security or financial independence. Because we see evidence that these desires are fulfilled in others, we believe and work toward their fulfillment in our own life and family. Another common hope of mankind is the hope of immortality. Medical advances work toward fulfillment of this hope. In some ways, legends and religions keep the hope of immortality alive in us. But for immortality to move from a dream to a hope there must be some degree of evidence or confidence of its fulfillment. God gives us that confidence. Christ's resurrection is that evidence. The stone had been removed not so Jesus could exit, but that we might see He has risen. The strips of linen and burial cloth were left behind not because grave thieves took the time to remove them, but that we might see Christ has risen. The angels asked not out of curiosity why Mary was crying, but that she might ponder the evidence for the hope of resurrection.

The celebration of Easter is the celebration of the hope of immortality. Because Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, we who trust Him have the same hope for ourselves. We can have the same confidence demonstrated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:52-54:

"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.' "





TUESDAY, APRIL 7

## THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

Vincent Jang, Rev., True Sunshine Episcopal Church, San Francisco

*<sup>13</sup> Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. <sup>14</sup> They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. <sup>15</sup> As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; <sup>16</sup> but they were kept from recognizing him.*

*<sup>31</sup> Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"*

(Luke 24:13-16, 31-32)

Imagine you are in 33 AD in Jerusalem. There is a lot going on in anticipation of the preparation for the Passover. It's crowded and you are among thousands of people along with Roman soldiers. The situation is tense all around and there is not much you can do about it without getting yourself arrested. Jesus comes to Jerusalem. Little did they know how Jesus was going to save them from their sins? As the days grew towards the final gathering of his friends and disciples at the upper room, the prayers at the Garden, the arrest, condemnation and death of Jesus on the cross, were not their hearts burning from all that has happened?

Then as scriptures foretold by Jesus he will rise again and some of the women of the group has already discovered that when Jesus appears before them at the tomb. These women ran hastily to tell the disciples and yet when they came to the tomb and did not find Jesus there, they too found their hearts burning from excitement and fear all at the same time.

On the road to Emmaus where a stranger walked with these two disciples of Jesus and yet they were amazed that this stranger was not aware of what went on during these last few days. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" Your heart is beating faster in excitement on what has just happened.

Give thanks to God daily for the fact that Jesus has and will always be with you just as these men who were on their way to Emmaus.



WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

## THE PROOF IS IN THE EATING

Tim Tseng, President & Executive Director,  
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<sup>38</sup> He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?  
<sup>39</sup> Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not  
have flesh and bones, as you see I have.” <sup>40</sup> When he had said this, he showed them  
his hands and feet. <sup>41</sup> And while they still did not believe it because of joy and  
amazement, he asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup> They gave  
him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup> and he took it and ate it in their presence.

(Luke 24:38-43, NIV)

When Asian American Christians tell me how they came to faith, many say that the logic of Christianity convinced them of its truth. They point to the historical accuracy of the Bible and Jesus’ claim to be the Savior. Others come to faith because of wonderful worship experiences. They feel such joy and amazement that they just know that God has to be real. Luke’s account of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance before his disciples reminds us that physical evidence or feelings are not enough to dispel doubt. Even after Jesus showed his nail pierced hands and feet, his disciples did not believe him. Strangely, their “joy and amazement” at seeing him prevented them from recognizing him. Apparently neither physical evidence nor feelings were proof enough that Jesus had truly risen from the dead and was present among them! To believe in the risen Savior because of logic and feelings is good. But Luke reminds us that a relationship with Jesus is more important. Most people do not eat with strangers. We prefer to share meals with people we trust. Indeed, the word “companion” means literally “one who shares bread.” The disciples, it appears, truly believed only after Jesus ate with them. Perhaps the meal with the risen Lord reminded them of the Last Supper, the meal they shared with Jesus just before his crucifixion; the meal Christians commemorate on Maundy Thursday. So when Christians celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we do so to remember Jesus’ death. But we should also remember that each time we participate in the Lord’s Supper, our relationship with the living Lord is reaffirmed. At the heart of the matter, the best evidence for our faith is a relationship, not logic or feelings.

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me.

(Revelation 3:20, NIV)



THURSDAY, APRIL 9

MAUNDY THURSDAY

## TO BELIEVE OR NOT TO BELIEVE?

Darren Lim, Associative Pastor, East Bay Alliance Church, Oakland

<sup>26</sup> 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!" <sup>27</sup> 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." <sup>28</sup> Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!" <sup>29</sup> Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

<sup>30</sup> Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. <sup>31</sup> But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

(John 20:26-31, NIV)

Can you imagine Thomas' surprise when his friends told him the news that Jesus was alive? Impossible, was probably his first thought. He told these friends that he needed to see proof, the wounds from Jesus' hand and side. Thomas would have to see it to believe it.

According to John, it was eight days later, Jesus graciously submits Himself to Thomas' disbelief. Here the disciples were locked in the room, but this time Thomas was with them. Jesus came right through the walls and stood in the middle of the room, for one purpose and that was to address Thomas directly and offer him a chance to inspect the wounds in his hands and side. Immediately, Thomas made his confession, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

No doubt there are many people like Thomas today. Unbelief and an unwillingness to respond to the Gospel are unfortunately natural in the human heart. Even as Jesus had told Peter that flesh and blood had not revealed to him that he was the Christ, but by His Father in heaven, so it must be in the preaching and teaching of the Gospel. God must work in the heart by His Holy Spirit that conviction may come.

For those of us who are believers, Jesus wants us to put our faith in Him, without feeling, seeing, or proving anything. It is still true: "Come near to God and he will come near to you" (James 4:8). What might obstruct your faith this week? Are there questions for which you do not have answers? Pray for God to reveal Himself in a mighty way in that specific area. Remember, "Blessed are those who believe without seeing me" (John 20:29b).



FRIDAY, APRIL 10

GOOD FRIDAY

## RETURNING TO SAFETY

Paul Lee, Pastor, Berkeley Chinese Baptist Church, Berkeley

<sup>1</sup> After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup> Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together.

<sup>3</sup> Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We will go with you." They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup> Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Jesus said to them, "Children, do you have any fish?" They answered him, "No." <sup>6</sup> He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish.

(John 21:1-6, NIV)

Have you ever been discouraged? It's easy to trust Jesus when things are going good but what about the times when it starts getting rough? What about the times when the future suddenly becomes very uncertain. I recently faced a situation like that. We were looking at an uncertain future, knowing that in a few weeks I would be out of a job. So my wife asked me, "Should we cut back on our tithing the next two months so that we can save some extra money?" And I gave her the answer that Christians seem to give when they don't want to make a decision. I said, "Let's pray about it." A week later the decision was made. I came back to my wife and told her that we weren't going to cut back on giving back to God. God had told her the same thing. It always seems like the first reaction when things become uncertain is to go back to our former way of thinking, because it seems safe. That's what Peter and the other disciples did; they went back to fishing, because they didn't understand what was happening. With fishing, they could be in control. Sometimes, the ways of the world seem more secure, because it is something that we believe that we can control. But in the end, we always find that the world's way is never secure. That way is always fraught with uncertainty. But when we follow Jesus and His leading, we are always secure, because God is sovereign. He is in control, and He will always provide.

Was there ever a time that you became discouraged, and abandoned God's calling, only to return to the safety of the familiar? How certain is your trust in God to provide?



SATURDAY, APRIL 11

## RELATIONAL RESTORATION

Johnson Chiu, Pastor, Dr., Faith Walk Community Church, San Ramon  
Asian Director, The Leadership Connection, Concord  
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<sup>15</sup> When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?” “Yes, Lord,” he said, “you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my lambs.” <sup>16</sup> Again Jesus said, “Simon son of John, do you truly love me?” He answered, “Yes, Lord, you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Take care of my sheep.” <sup>17</sup> The third time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, “Do you love me?” He said, “Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.” Jesus said, “Feed my sheep.

<sup>19</sup> Then he said to him, “Follow me!”

<sup>21</sup> When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” <sup>22</sup> Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.”

(John 21:15-17, 19b,21-22, NIV)

Those closest to us have the greatest opportunity to wound us. It certainly was true for Jesus. Peter, the most dedicated of disciples, betrayed Jesus three times at his greatest moment of need — at it hurt Jesus deeply. This first encounter after Peter’s denials is filled with tension and shame; Peter needs more than forgiveness; he needs restoration. Jesus’ goal is not to punish; he has already forgiven Peter but how can he be restored? After cooking and serving the disciples a meal, reminiscent of the miracle with fish and loaves and their last meal together, Jesus asks Peter a seemingly simple question, “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Three times the question is put to Simon, the name of Peter before he met Jesus. Peter is taken aback by Jesus’ straightforward question. His heart and commitment is challenged. His denials are still so fresh, he has no defense. He wants to say yes but does not want his words to ring hollow. Jesus has every right to walk away yet this is not the Jesus we know. Each time Jesus requests, “Feed my sheep.” Peter, if you love me, you will love those whom I love. These words ring with a tone of invitation rather than a command. “Anything Lord,” yearns Peter. Jesus then invites Peter, “Follow me.” Don’t worry about anything or anyone else. Peter’s denials and desertion, running away from Jesus got him into trouble. His restoration will come by repenting, turning around and running toward Jesus! He willingly follows and is restored. The gracious heart of God invites you to run to him, follow him, even if you have run so many times away from Jesus, to find your restoration.



SUNDAY, APRIL 12  
EASTER

## HOPE OF SALVATION FOR ALL

Damon Au, Rev., Cornerstone Trinity Baptist Church, San Francisco

<sup>9</sup> After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. <sup>10</sup> They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. <sup>11</sup> “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.”

(Acts 1:9-11, NIV)

There are times in our lives when things happen and we don't understand why. Sometimes when an accident or a death occurs to a love one or when a leader and those he leads part company. A catastrophe happens, like the tsunami where thousands of lives were lost. Do we just stand around and feel helpless? What is our plan of actions?

The men of Galilee had the privilege of witnessing Christ's ascension and the angels appearing to them. What a miraculous event that occurred. We will not have the same privilege as the first century Christians but we need to understand a biblical truth found in Act 1:9-11. Christ has risen and He will return. The words of the angels were an essential part of preparing the apostles mentally and emotionally. This message contained both a challenge and an incentive that there is HOPE. The Second coming of Christ will not be disappointing and it should be anticipated.

We live in a world of lost souls who will one day unexpectedly stand before the judgment seat of God without knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ unless we fulfill our commission and tell them the message; there will not be a heaven for them.

Statistics' have shown, “75% - 90% were converted through the influence of friends and relatives. Millions of souls will depend on how we did our jobs as believers. We have an amazing and incredible story to tell and share with everyone we know. My brothers and sisters in Christ, Jesus has died and risen on the third day; isn't that message worth sharing over and over again? Our Lord has chosen you as an extension of the Gospel; go now and ask God to bring those people into your path.



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