

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Palm Sunday: Mark 14:1-11 – Jesus is Anointed at Bethany

¹ *It was now two days before Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread. The leading priests and the teachers of religious law were still looking for an opportunity to capture Jesus secretly and kill him. ² “But not during the Passover celebration,” they agreed, “or the people may riot.”*

³ *Meanwhile, Jesus was in Bethany at the home of Simon, a man who had previously had leprosy. While he was eating, a woman came in with a beautiful alabaster jar of expensive perfume made from essence of nard. She broke open the jar and poured the perfume over his head.*

⁴ *Some of those at the table were indignant. “Why waste such expensive perfume?” they asked.*

⁵ *“It could have been sold for a year’s wages and the money given to the poor!” So they scolded her harshly.*

⁶ *But Jesus replied, “Leave her alone. Why criticize her for doing such a good thing to me? ⁷ You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to. But you will not always have me. ⁸ She has done what she could and has anointed my body for burial ahead of time. ⁹ I tell you the truth, wherever the Good News is preached throughout the world, this woman’s deed will be remembered and discussed.”*

¹⁰ *Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the leading priests to arrange to betray Jesus to them. ¹¹ They were delighted when they heard why he had come, and they promised to give him money. So he began looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus.*

Meditation by Angela Neufeld. Kingfisher Farm, Surrey, B.C.

The woman at Bethany was lavish. Throwing away her money on perfume and then pouring that precious perfume over Jesus’ feet—she became a mockery. What a waste!

The thought of wasting time, wasting money—wasting anything—is horrible to me. Laziness. Irresponsibility. In the throes of summer on the farm, there is simply not time to waste. And yet, what am I missing with my focused, determined work ethic? I see others sitting in the sun and visiting and think—I *don’t have time to waste*.

On the other hand, I often feel like my life here at Kingfisher Farm is so lavish. I am able to breathe in the crisp morning air, spend time cleaning up after chickens and cows who don’t talk back to me, harvest fresh food, preserve food for the winter, skim off cream milked in the morning to top our baked oatmeal—this is lavish. It’s lavish when my conversation is interrupted by the barred owl’s call. It’s lavish when the corn seed that my children planted can now be ground into gluten free pancakes that I can eat. Or, maybe it sounds foolish, like living in the past, making way more work than one needs with modern conveniences. Could it be that my deep attention and care for God’s creation could be an act of lavish worship?

I want to cultivate eyes and a heart that stop for beauty, which can say to my mind and body: “Hey, it is worth wasting time here—to the Glory of God.”

Questions inviting response:

1. What among the lavish things of my life can I offer to Jesus during this Passion Week?
 - What is the Holy Spirit prodding me to give as a private acknowledgement of my devotion to Jesus until Easter Sunday.
2. Where do I find myself behaving more like Judas than the woman? How does the busyness of my life, and the values of my culture interfere with worshipping Christ, my Lord?
 - Is Christ calling me to make some adjustments?

Prayer

Loving God - Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,

Forgive me for my busyness, and the many moments that my lifestyle leaves you outside and looking in, rather than reigning over me with your loving wisdom and grace. As you gave up even your Son for me, may you teach me again the joy of sacrifice, and the way of the Cross. And may you accept my Lenten sacrifice today, as I offer it to you in complete humility, knowing that it is nothing in comparison with what you have given for me.

Thank you for your Holy Spirit, your wonderful church, the fellowship of others, the forgiveness of sins, the promised resurrection, and of life with you, Father, Son and Spirit, forever. Amen.

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Monday Prior to Easter: John 13:1-17 – Jesus washes the feet of his disciples.

13 Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end. ²It was time for supper, and the devil had already prompted Judas, son of Simon Iscariot, to betray Jesus. ³Jesus knew that the Father had given him authority over everything and that he had come from God and would return to God. ⁴So he got up from the table, took off his robe, wrapped a towel around his waist, ⁵and poured water into a basin. Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him.

⁶When Jesus came to Simon Peter, Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?"

⁷Jesus replied, "You don't understand now what I am doing, but someday you will."

⁸"No," Peter protested, "you will never ever wash my feet!"

Jesus replied, "Unless I wash you, you won't belong to me."

⁹Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!"

¹⁰Jesus replied, "A person who has bathed all over does not need to wash, except for the feet, to be entirely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not all of you." ¹¹For Jesus knew who would betray him. That is what he meant when he said, "Not all of you are clean."

¹²After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, "Do you understand what I was doing? ¹³You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord,' and you are right, because that's what I am. ¹⁴And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth, slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.

Meditation by Rebecca Pousette – Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Vancouver.

It was a solemn night: weariness rested heavily on the shoulders of the man we had come to call Lord. We did not know the events that were about to take place. Reclining at the table, I wondered at this man's identity. A Messiah who walked on water and touched the eyes of sinners. He was not the king we had expected, but he was a king I could follow: a healer, commander of the wind and the waves, someone who carried the power of God within him. As the food was passed around, he got up, and took off his outer robe. Kneeling down, he began to wash our feet. Silent embarrassment and shock filled the room: embarrassment that one of us had not thought to wash his feet, and shock that this man had taken on the job of a household slave. As he moved closer towards me, thoughts of my failures and unworthiness filled my head, followed by shame and then pride. I had to protest.

His response was firm, full of relentless love: unless I let him wash me, I could have no part with him. The full extent of his words did not become clear until later, but they shook me. He was like no leader I had ever known. This king did not demand my action, sacrifice or obedience. He first wanted my heart, dark, prideful, and selfish as it was. He wanted the gentler and more difficult thing: to take my heart and make it clean and right. As he took my dirty feet into his hands, my shame and pride broke as I felt the weight of his accepting love. A love that covered sin, and made broken things whole.

Lord, come and wash us.

Questions inviting response:

1. As you walked with Jesus this past while, where have your feet become dirty? What is the Master washing off of your feet?
2. Jesus tells Peter that because he has given his life to the Master, he does not need a bath – only his feet need washing.
 - Where in your life has the enemy persuaded you that you are dirty from head to toe?
 - Take a moment and thank Jesus for saving you – for bathing you from head to toe in his grace. Commit your heart again to the Master as you journey with him this week.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ,

Thank you for cleansing me through your death and resurrection. Thank you that I am washed, that I am completely saved, and that I am no longer condemned. I embrace your love and grace today, and welcome you washing my feet, recognizing that sin will dirty me, but never remove me from you.

May I learn to live freely in all things, and may I also wash the feet of those I encounter.

Amen.

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Tuesday Prior to Easter: Luke 22:39-53 – Jesus arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane.

³⁹Accompanied by the disciples, Jesus left the upstairs room and went as usual to the Mount of Olives. ⁴⁰There he told them, “Pray that you will not give in to temptation.”

⁴¹He walked away, about a stone’s throw, and knelt down and prayed, ⁴²“Father, if you are willing, please take this cup of suffering away from me. Yet I want your will to be done, not mine.” ⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared and strengthened him. ⁴⁴He prayed more fervently, and he was in such agony of spirit that his sweat fell to the ground like great drops of blood.

⁴⁵At last he stood up again and returned to the disciples, only to find them asleep, exhausted from grief. ⁴⁶“Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not give in to temptation.”

⁴⁷But even as Jesus said this, a crowd approached, led by Judas, one of the twelve disciples. Judas walked over to Jesus to greet him with a kiss. ⁴⁸“But Jesus said, “Judas, would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

⁴⁹When the other disciples saw what was about to happen, they exclaimed, “Lord, should we fight?” ⁵⁰And one of them (Peter) struck at the high priest’s slave, slashing off his right ear.

⁵¹But Jesus said, “No more of this.” And he touched the man’s ear and healed him.

⁵²Then Jesus spoke to the leading priests, the captains of the Temple guard, and the elders who had come for him. “Am I some dangerous revolutionary,” he asked, “that you come with swords and clubs to arrest me? ⁵³Why didn’t you arrest me in the Temple? I was there every day. But this is your moment, the time when the power of darkness reigns.”

⁵⁴So they arrested him and led him to the high priest’s home.

Meditation by Sharolyn Newington – Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Vancouver.

In Leviticus 14:14 instructions are given for the cleansing of those suffering leprosy; they are to be anointed on their right ear lobe (and right hand and foot), with the blood of a spotless lamb. Earlier in Leviticus, Moses also anoints Aaron for priestly ministry with the blood of a ram on his right ear. The right ear appears again, in Luke 22:47-53. Malchus, a servant of the High Priest, is sent with a band of others to arrest Jesus. He is employed (or perhaps even cajoled) to do the dirty work of the Jewish leaders.

When Judas betrays Jesus with a kiss, Malchus and the band of men move forward to grab and bind Jesus. One of the disciples asks, "Lord, should we strike with the sword?" Before Jesus has time to answer, Simon-Peter, loyal but impetuous, strikes out, cutting off the right ear of the man closest—Malchus.

Jesus rebukes the use of violence against the very people who are about to send him to a violent death. As a powerful sign he picks up the severed, bloody ear and brings healing to Malchus with a gentle touch to his right lobe.

Healing comes through the spotless lamb.

I imagine Malchus stepping back from the commotion. Touching his re-created ear. Taking in the scene with a new perspective. Looking across at the man who healed and anointed him.

Questions inviting response:

1. When did you first look across at Jesus and recognize him as Messiah, your Healer?
 - What have been the wounds that he has bound for you, covering them with his healing touch?
2. When have you been like Peter, the loyal but impetuous follower? What has happened on your journey with Jesus to temper your impulsiveness?
3. Why have the sword and the Church never been able to co-exist?

Prayer

Jesus, Lord of Peace,

Teach me today the way of gentleness. May I be reminded that I follow the Gentle Shepherd, who reigns as the King of kings and Lord of lords. Fill me with your Spirit, who provides me the strength to walk in your ways. As I journey to your Cross, may I, too, carry the cross of worldly power to the place of execution, and nail myself to it in order to follow you with my life.

Amen.

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Wednesday Prior to Easter: John 18:33-40 – Jesus encounters Pilate, the Roman Governor.

²⁸ Jesus' trial before Caiaphas ended in the early hours of the morning. Then he was taken to the headquarters of the Roman governor. His accusers didn't go inside because it would defile them, and they wouldn't be allowed to celebrate the Passover. ²⁹ So Pilate, the governor, went out to them and asked, "What is your charge against this man?"

³⁰ "We wouldn't have handed him over to you if he weren't a criminal!" they retorted.

³¹ "Then take him away and judge him by your own law," Pilate told them.

"Only the Romans are permitted to execute someone," the Jewish leaders replied. ³² (This fulfilled Jesus' prediction about the way he would die)

³³ Then Pilate went back into his headquarters and called for Jesus to be brought to him. "Are you the king of the Jews?" he asked him.

³⁴ Jesus replied, "Is this your own question, or did others tell you about me?"

³⁵ "Am I a Jew?" Pilate retorted. "Your own people and their leading priests brought you to me for trial. Why? What have you done?"

³⁶ Jesus answered, "My Kingdom is not an earthly kingdom. If it were, my followers would fight to keep me from being handed over to the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world."

³⁷ Pilate said, "So you are a king?"

Jesus responded, "You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true."

³⁸ "What is truth?" Pilate asked. Then he went out again to the people and told them, "He is not guilty of any crime. ³⁹ But you have a custom of asking me to release one prisoner each year at Passover. Would you like me to release this 'King of the Jews'?"

⁴⁰ But they shouted back, "No! Not this man. We want Barabbas!" (Barabbas was a revolutionary.)

¹⁹ Then Pilate had Jesus flogged with a lead-tipped whip. ² The soldiers wove a crown of thorns and put it on his head, and they put a purple robe on him. ³ "Hail! King of the Jews!" they mocked, as they slapped him across the face.

⁴ Pilate went outside again and said to the people, "I am going to bring him out to you now, but understand clearly that I find him not guilty." ⁵ Then Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And Pilate said, "Look, here is the man!"

⁶ When they saw him, the leading priests and Temple guards began shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

"Take him yourselves and crucify him," Pilate said. "I find him not guilty."

⁷ The Jewish leaders replied, "By our law he ought to die because he called himself the Son of God."

⁸ When Pilate heard this, he was more frightened than ever. ⁹ He took Jesus back into the headquarter^l again and asked him, "Where are you from?" But Jesus gave no answer. ¹⁰ "Why don't you talk to me?" Pilate demanded. "Don't you realize that I have the power to release you or crucify you?"

¹¹ Then Jesus said, "You would have no power over me at all unless it were given to you from above. So the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin."

¹² Then Pilate tried to release him, but the Jewish leaders shouted, "If you release this man, you are no 'friend of Caesar^l Anyone who declares himself a king is a rebel against Caesar."

¹³ When they said this, Pilate brought Jesus out to them again. Then Pilate sat down on the judgment seat on the platform that is called the Stone Pavement (in Hebrew, Gabbatha). ¹⁴ It was

now about noon on the day of preparation for the Passover. And Pilate said to the people^l “Look, here is your king!”

¹⁵ “Away with him,” they yelled. “Away with him! Crucify him!”

“What? Crucify your king?” Pilate asked.

“We have no king but Caesar,” the leading priests shouted back.

¹⁶ Then Pilate turned Jesus over to them to be crucified.

Meditation by Megan Mulder— Grandview Calvary Baptist Church, Vancouver.

The heart of Pilate must have been a deep, deep wound when he asked, “*What is truth?*”

Jesus loved Pilate profoundly and compassionately, and his silence is, I think, a result of that. When you love someone, and when you know their heart and the anguish set so secretly within their being that they have never put it to words, what is there to say? Compassion, from Latin, means together suffering, and sometimes suffering can knock the wind out of you.

The scene is set in my mind as if I were there: it is a small, second-story room. Pilate stands at the window looking out over the city. Jesus is quiet in the corner, himself very weary. *What is truth?* Pilate asks.

I wish so terribly that Pilate had looked—just for a moment!—away from the world and into the face of

God. They could have been two men burdened with grief—but burdened together. Though suffering is painful, it need not be lonely.

Questions inviting response:

1. What is the anguish of your heart today? Are you staring at it through life’s window, while Jesus is left in the corner? Will you invite him to journey with you in your anguish, even allowing the Savior to take your anguish from you?
2. Who are the anguished in your life? Ask the Father to reveal Jesus, the Truth, through you.

Prayer

Jesus, you are the way, and the truth, and the life.

I humble invite you again into my confusion and my brokenness, and ask you to breathe your truth into my weary bones and empty existence. Thank you that in you I find truth, meaning, joy and life itself. Amen.

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Thursday Prior to Easter: Zechariah 12:10 & John 19:25-27.

¹⁰ Then I will pour out a spirit of grace and prayer on the family of David and on the people of Jerusalem. They will look on me whom they have pierced and mourn for him as for an only son. They will grieve bitterly for him as for a firstborn son who has died.

²⁵ Standing near the cross were Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary (the wife of Clopas), and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved (John), he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." ²⁷ And he said to John, "Here is your mother." And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

Meditation by Tim Klauke

Some years ago I was in my home kneeling for evening prayers. I was sick. I wanted to crawl in bed and moan. As it was, I was contemplating Jesus' passion and suffering.

"Jesus," I said aloud, "I don't get it. You cared for people in the midst of your intense pain. I can't imagine caring for others when I feel like crap – even if it's the right thing to do."

Jesus' voice sounded right back: "Striving to do the 'right thing' will never be enough. But love? Now, that's an entirely different story."

Epiphany light shone in my head. "Even now in my ill condition, would I persist through adversity for my wife? Of course! I love her. Would I put myself out for my children? Of course! I love them."

"And so it must be for me," came the voice of Jesus. "You need love to be able to follow me."

As Jesus was enduring the torture of a cross, love provided the clarity of his last words. Love for his captors. Love for those crucified with him. Love for the Father. And yes, love for his mom and his best friend – the kind of love that assured her she'd be cared for in her eldest son's absence.

She gave birth to him, after all! Her love preceded his in this realm of earth. Yet into her heart of love, grieving at the confusing loss of this child of promise, came her son's love, assuring her that in his messiah endeavours, she was not forgotten. Yes, for her, too, there was love. Love to receive. Love to walk in. Love to live out of.

Questions inviting response:

1. For the next 10 minutes cloister yourself in silence and solitude in order to reflect upon Christ's love for you. Think about the realities of his providing love. Reflect on the people that he has put in your life to provide for you – family, friends, even strangers that have crossed your path.
2. Who has Christ given to you the responsibility of providing for? If asked, would they thankfully tell stories of your sacrificial love for them?
3. Read John 13:34-35. The act of loving others identifies to the world those who follow Jesus. Period. As your journey through Lent continues, make a decision to sacrifice something in order to provide for someone else, as an expression of Christ's sacrifice for you. Do it quietly, anonymously if you can, seeking nothing but the joy of providing in Christ's name.

Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ. You are a perfect reflection of the Father, and of His incredible love for each one of us. I come to you in deep humility, today, thanking you for loving me, and for teaching me how to love. I ask that you will pour into me the grace and love of your Spirit, and that I will love others as you love me. And I ask that I will pay special attention to those that I know you have given me special responsibility of caring for.

I bless you today, Lord, and thank you for this journey of Lent and what it teaches me about you and about myself.

Amen.

PASSION WEEK: A PILGRIMAGE WITH JESUS TO THE CROSS

Good Friday: Read Isaiah 53; Psalm 22:1-18; Luke 23:13-49 (below).

¹³ Then Pilate called together the leading priests and other religious leaders, along with the people, ¹⁴ and he announced his verdict. “You brought this man to me, accusing him of leading a revolt. I have examined him thoroughly on this point in your presence and find him innocent.

¹⁵ Herod came to the same conclusion and sent him back to us. Nothing this man has done calls for the death penalty. ¹⁶ So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

¹⁸ Then a mighty roar rose from the crowd, and with one voice they shouted, “Kill him, and release Barabbas to us!” ¹⁹ (Barabbas was in prison for taking part in an insurrection in Jerusalem against the government, and for murder.) ²⁰ Pilate argued with them, because he wanted to release Jesus. ²¹ But they kept shouting, “Crucify him! Crucify him!”

²² For the third time he demanded, “Why? What crime has he committed? I have found no reason to sentence him to death. So I will have him flogged, and then I will release him.”

²³ But the mob shouted louder and louder, demanding that Jesus be crucified, and their voices prevailed. ²⁴ So Pilate sentenced Jesus to die as they demanded. ²⁵ As they had requested, he released Barabbas, the man in prison for insurrection and murder. But he turned Jesus over to them to do as they wished.

The Crucifixion

²⁶ As they led Jesus away, a man named Simon, who was from Cyrene, happened to be coming in from the countryside. The soldiers seized him and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus. ²⁷ A large crowd trailed behind, including many grief-stricken women. ²⁸ But Jesus turned and said to them, “Daughters of Jerusalem, don’t weep for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the days are coming when they will say, ‘Fortunate indeed are the women who are childless, the wombs that have not borne a child and the breasts that have never nursed.’ ³⁰ People will beg the mountains, ‘Fall on us,’ and plead with the hills, ‘Bury us.’ ³¹ For if these things are done when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”

³² Two others, both criminals, were led out to be executed with him. ³³ When they came to a place called The Skull, they nailed him to the cross. And the criminals were also crucified—one on his right and one on his left.

³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.” And the soldiers gambled for his clothes by throwing dice.

³⁵ The crowd watched and the leaders scoffed. “He saved others,” they said, “let him save himself if he is really God’s Messiah, the Chosen One.” ³⁶ The soldiers mocked him, too, by offering him a drink of sour wine. ³⁷ They called out to him, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸ A sign was fastened above him with these words: “This is the King of the Jews.”

³⁹ One of the criminals hanging beside him scoffed, “So you’re the Messiah, are you? Prove it by saving yourself—and us, too, while you’re at it!”

⁴⁰ But the other criminal protested, “Don’t you fear God even when you have been sentenced to die? ⁴¹ We deserve to die for our crimes, but this man hasn’t done anything wrong.” ⁴² Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”

⁴³ And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

The Death of Jesus

⁴⁴ By this time it was about noon, and darkness fell across the whole land until three o'clock.

⁴⁵ The light from the sun was gone. And suddenly, the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn down the middle. ⁴⁶ Then Jesus shouted, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" And with those words he breathed his last.

⁴⁷ When the Roman officer overseeing the execution saw what had happened, he worshiped God and said, "Surely this man was innocent." ⁴⁸ And when all the crowd that came to see the crucifixion saw what had happened, they went home in deep sorrow. ⁴⁹ But Jesus' friends, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance watching.

Questions inviting response:

1. Take a moment and prepare a list of unordinary, unexpected moments that appear in Luke's account above. Which moments impact you more than others? Why?
2. Three o'clock on Passover Friday was the moment when the lambs were slaughtered in the temple of Jerusalem. From this moment on until early Sunday morning, those who loved Jesus were in a state of shock and deep grief. It is safe to assume that they spent these 36 hours going over events in their mind again and again, with heavy hearts and clouded minds.
 - How do you plan on spending this Friday Evening and Saturday? As you complete your Lenten journey, will you take this time for quiet reflection and sombre thanks for Christ's death that has brought you into the holy presence of our Father God?
 - Perhaps tonight and tomorrow you might conduct a fast in order to reflect and pray prior to Sunday morning.

Prayer

Merciful God, Lover of my soul. I have only my soul to give you today – a soul full of brokenness, and even lingering darkness though I may have known you for many years. As I recommit my life to you this Easter, may you overpower my will and enter even the darkest parts of my existence, cleansing them with you grace that washes clean all who come to you. Grant me humility, but also great boldness through your Spirit. Deliver me from my shame, and bring me into the joy of your salvation. Amen.

THE COMPLETION OF PASSION WEEK, AND THE BEGINNING OF PENTECOST

Today is Easter Sunday. Lent is over and we have finished our journey with Jesus to the Cross. The days of fasting are behind. The joy of Christ's resurrection from the dead is upon us, and we glory with all the saints and angels in declaring, "The Lord has Risen – He has Risen Indeed!"

RESSURECTION SUNDAY – THE FIRST SUNDAY OF PENTECOST - John 20:1-21, 30-31.

The Resurrection of Jesus

¹ Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. ² She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, "They have taken the Lord's body out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"

³ Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. ⁴ They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. ⁵ He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn't go in. ⁶ Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, ⁷ while the cloth that had covered Jesus' head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. ⁸ Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed— ⁹ for until then they still hadn't understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. ¹⁰ Then they went home.

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

¹¹ Mary was standing outside the tomb crying, and as she wept, she stooped and looked in. ¹² She saw two white-robed angels, one sitting at the head and the other at the foot of the place where the body of Jesus had been lying. ¹³ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" the angels asked her.

"Because they have taken away my Lord," she replied, "and I don't know where they have put him."

¹⁴ She turned to leave and saw someone standing there. It was Jesus, but she didn't recognize him. ¹⁵ "Dear woman, why are you crying?" Jesus asked her. "Who are you looking for?"

She thought he was the gardener. "Sir," she said, "if you have taken him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will go and get him."

¹⁶ "Mary!" Jesus said.

She turned to him and cried out, "Rabboni!" (which is Hebrew for "Teacher").

¹⁷ "Don't cling to me," Jesus said, "for I haven't yet ascended to the Father. But go find my brothers and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.'"

¹⁸ Mary Magdalene found the disciples and told them, "I have seen the Lord!" Then she gave them his message.

Jesus Appears to His Disciples

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

Purpose of the Book

³⁰ *The disciples saw Jesus do many other miraculous signs in addition to the ones recorded in this book. ³¹ But these are written so that you may continue to believe^l that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing in him you will have life by the power of his name.*

Questions inviting response:

1. What has been the most meaningful part of the Lenten journey for you this year? Has it been extended times of prayer? Giving up something for the Lord? Focusing on a habit that you know must be given to Jesus? Studying the life of Christ in a focused way? Something else?
 - What have you learned about *Jesus* during Lent that is new and transforming?
2. Pentecost is the next season in the Christian year, and is filled with another kind of anticipation – this time for the promised Holy Spirit that was poured upon Christ’s followers in great power. Pentecost also marks the beginning of the Church as the new holy people of God – people from every tribe, language and culture who are set apart to worship Him and take the gospel to all nations of the earth.
 - Invest these fifty days of Pentecost in praying for the Church of Jesus throughout the world. Pray for your brothers and sisters who live under the Lord’s authority across the world. Outwardly they may not look like you, worship like you or pray like you. They may live in freedom and prosperity or in great persecution and hardship. They may have different political views, and social norms. But they are your brethren who love the Lord Jesus Christ with all their hearts. Pray for their witness – that it may be bold and full of the power of the Holy Spirit. Pray for their leaders – that they may shepherd their people with Christ’s wisdom and love. Pray for their children – that they may learn to love the Lord. Pray for unity amongst all of us, and care for one another – that the world may know that we are the King’s people.
Pray as well for the person that God has placed on your heart and mind regarding finding Jesus and embracing Him as the Messiah and Savior. Pray that the Holy Spirit will powerfully work around them to bring them to the Master.

Prayer

Risen Christ, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Thank you for new life through your death and resurrection. Thank you for your Church, of which I am a member, full of your Spirit and gifted to serve. Thank you for the future that is in your complete control. Thank you that Satan is defeated and that I have nothing to fear from him. Thank you for heaven that it is in my future. Thank you for my daily bread, and for your Word which is the bread that fills my mind as I also feast upon it.

May you surround me with yourself, and may there be no time that I am not in your perfect will.

*May your blessing go with me as I humbly do my best to serve others in your strength.
Amen.*