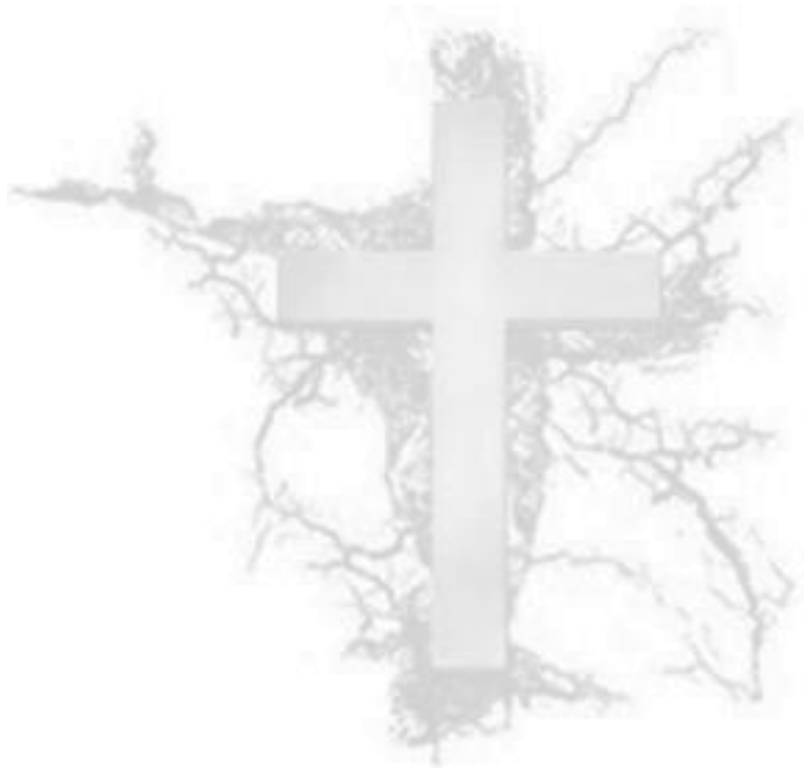


Journey to the Cross

Devotions

2023



Journey to the Cross
Devotions 2023

Greetings in the Name of our Resurrected Lord,

Last fall I began to think about writing a devotion booklet for Easter. I had hoped to write 30 devotions leading up to Easter and 10 more for us to read following Easter.

Then in the middle of November I broke my leg. Because I couldn't drive, and had a lot of sitting time, I decided to see if it was possible to put together a devotion booklet for each day of January. By the grace of God, and the help of Beverley, I was able to finish that booklet in time. Many who read the devotions, both in the booklet and online, expressed their gratitude for the meditations and encouraged me to write others.

Well, as you begin to look through this booklet, you are going to quickly realize I came up very short of my goal of 40 devotions. As March drew closer, I realized I wasn't going to finish the amount I'd hoped for. I asked Pastor Matt about the possibility of writing some. Thankfully he agreed and I think you're going to enjoy what he has shared.

If I had reached my goal of 40 devotions, I would have tried to be more specific about the order in which they were placed. This booklet is certainly not at the place I had hoped for. However, I still trust the Holy Spirit to use it to exalt Christ and to help us have a deeper appreciation for the work of the cross.

May we love Him more deeply because He first loved us!

Pastor Mike
March 2nd, 2023

Day 1:

Revelation 5: [4] So I wept much, because no one was found worthy to open and read the scroll, or to look at it. [5] But one of the elders said to me, "Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals." [6] And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth. [7] Then He came and took the scroll out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne. [8] Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. [9] And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.

What should be our response to who Christ is? What should be our response to what Christ has done? The drama of Revelation 5 unfolds in heaven. We see the picture of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders falling before the Lamb and singing, You are worthy. We read of a number of beings too great to number saying in a loud voice Worthy is the Lamb. If one were to summarize Chapters 4 & 5 of Revelation in one word describing what is happening, that word would be worship.

Jesus is the perfect, sinless Lamb who was slain for our sins. No one else could have paid the sin debt. **He is worthy of our worship.** He has redeemed us to God by His blood out of every tribe and tongue and nation. **He is worthy of our worship.** The four living creatures and the twenty-four elders invite us to look upon the Lamb, fall before Him and sing to Him a new song. They show us a glimpse of the final victory and invite us to proclaim **He is worthy of our worship.** Hopefully the following devotions will help us consider many precious truths about the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Above everything, may focusing on the cross move us to join with the host of heaven in declaring to Him, **You are worthy of my worship and I will choose to worship you.**

Day 2:

Revelation 13:8 All who dwell on the earth will worship him, (the dragon) whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

We know from a historical point that Christ was crucified some 2,000 years ago. However, this passage says He was slain from the foundation of the world. Does this mean He suffered and died twice? No, as it says in Hebrews 10:12, He offered one sacrifice for sins for all time. The cross wasn't Plan B after Adam and Eve sinned. God knew they were going to choose disobedience before He created them.

The cross had always been at the heart of the purposes of the Godhead. Before the world was formed it was determined that Christ would be slain by crucifixion for the sins of God's people. When Adam and Eve sinned, they covered themselves with fig leaves trying to hide their guilt. However, following their sin, God began to demonstrate that the shedding of blood was required as the payment for sin. The LORD killed an innocent animal. He took the skin of that animal to cover them. This animal's death was the first foreshadowing of the death of the innocent Lamb of God who would pay for, and take away, the sins of the world. Adam & Eve's sin cost that animal its life. (There had never been death of any type up until this point.)

The Bible says, "the wages of sin is death." He teaches us from the beginning of time that we are helpless when it comes to paying for, or covering up, our own sins. Adam & Eve tried figtree religion which didn't meet God's requirements. Make sure you aren't depending on anything for your salvation other than the completed work of Christ.

Day 3:

Galatians 6:14 NIV - May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.

The Contemporary English Version translates this verse as, *“But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* **Anything!** But why wouldn't Paul boast about Jesus' teachings, His miracles, or His nature? Well, the truth is, Paul did boast about all of these. But His emphasis is that at the foundation and the heart of the Christian faith is the message of the cross.

If the message of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection moves from the center to the peripheral, it is evidence that the church is losing its direction. There are a great many individuals, and churches, who talk of their commitment to Christ, but who are truly only committed to the parts of Christ with which they are comfortable. They might talk about Him being a great teacher or a great example. They might talk about His miracles or His justice for women and the poor. But that which is the foundation of the gospel is often missing.

Jesus' teachings and example couldn't transform lost sinners. It took the cross to do that. It took the perfect sacrifice and the perfect payment for sin. The cross of Christ says, we have all sinned against a Holy God and we can't do anything to pay for our sins. The Cross of Christ demonstrated that God is holy; that He couldn't ignore sin, and that a perfect payment was required to atone for it. The Cross of Christ demonstrates that even though we were in rebellion against God, yet He still loved us so much He was willing to do whatever necessary. The Cross of Christ includes His burial and His resurrection. His death was proof of His taking on the full punishment for sin so we don't have to. His resurrection is proof positive that His promises are true and that the payment for our sin was accepted.

Let's invite the Holy Spirit to give us a renewed passion for the message of the cross.

Day 4:

Luke 18: 35-43 35) As he drew near to Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. 36) And hearing a crowd going by, he inquired what this meant. 37) They told him, “Jesus of Nazareth is passing by.” 38) And he cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” 39) And those who were in front rebuked him, telling him to be silent. But he cried out all the more, “Son of David, have mercy on me!” 40) And Jesus stopped and commanded him to be brought to him. And when he came near, he asked him, 41) “What do you want me to do for you?” He said, “Lord, let me recover my sight.” 42) And Jesus said to him, “Recover your sight; your faith has made you well.” 43) And immediately he recovered his sight and followed him, glorifying God. And all the people, when they saw it, gave praise to God.

Do you remember the stories of the beginning of Jesus' ministry? It seemed like Jesus exploded onto the scene with a huge amount of excitement. There were large crowds right from the beginning, all wanting to know who this guy Jesus was and what he was doing, and, of course, they came wanting miracles. Jesus was quickly realized to be a man who had authority to bring healing like no one else ever had. One of the things you see from those stories is the huge number of people, not just coming for miracles themselves, but bringing people they knew who were sick to be healed.

It is such a contrast to this scene from the end of Jesus' ministry. Here we have Jesus, the twelve, and other followers who are on their way to Jerusalem. Jesus has told the twelve that he is going to be handed over and killed, but they don't understand it yet. A blind man on the side of the road is crying out for Jesus to have mercy on him. This time, some of the people around Jesus rebuke the man, and tell him to keep quiet. You can feel the man's desperation, because he couldn't care less what they say, he knows the source of all mercy is passing by, and so he cries out all the louder. Jesus, of course, stops and shows him mercy.

Continued from Page 4

It's easy enough for us to put ourselves in the shoes of the blind man. If we have believed in Jesus for our salvation, we all came to a time when we were desperate for the hand of God to heal us and make us whole. We cried out to God, just like this man. But what about those who rebuked the blind man? Do we ever act like them? Unfortunately, the answer is yes. Even as followers of Christ, there are times we allow our hearts to grow cold and insensitive to those who are in desperate need of the mercy of Christ.

If these followers understood Jesus' mission, if they understood why he was on His way to Jerusalem, they would have understood Jesus' desire to show mercy to the blind man. Do we know today how desperately God wants to show mercy to the lost? The purposes and priorities of God's heart certainly ought to be the purposes and priorities of ours. Let's pray today and ask God to give us His heart to see His mercy rain on the lost and suffering.

Day 5:

Proverbs 16:6 In mercy and truth Atonement is provided for iniquity; And by the fear of the LORD one departs from evil.

For atonement to be provided for our sins, it requires both mercy and truth. Atonement refers to the needed reconciliation between sinful man and the holy God. John 1:17 says *that grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*. The marriage of mercy/grace and truth are mentioned many times in Scripture. In almost every place mercy/grace are listed before truth. This doesn't mean that mercy is more important than truth. However, none of us would want to, nor could we, face God's truth without it being preceded by mercy.

When God came in the Son, He came knowing the truth that we are all sinners living in rebellion against Him and deserving of condemnation. However, Christ came to seek and save the lost. His mercy/grace demonstrated His indescribable love which caused Him to want to forgive His creation and reconcile them to Himself. John 3:17 describes it well when it says - *For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved.*

In God's economy it isn't grace or truth, it is grace and truth. When we proclaim one at the exclusion of the other, we are preaching a false gospel. Some seem to feel called to be proclaimers of truth while showing no mercy to the one dying in their sin. There is a voice of judgment which offers no hope. In our modern culture, there is a growing proclamation that because God is love, He is fine with us setting our own moral standards. People who hold this view often insist that those who teach absolute biblical truth are full of hate.

Jesus told sinners the truth about themselves and He crawled in the ditch with them to help rescue them from their lostness. He still does the same today when we become His hands, feet, voice, and ears.

Father, guide us by Your Spirit to walk in mercy and truth. Thank you for loving me enough to tell me the truth about myself and extending Your mercy to rescue me from myself. Amen.

Day 6:

Ephesians 1: 3-6: 3) Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, 4) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, 5) having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, 6) to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

As you think about the cross today, realize that Christ didn't suffer just to save you **from** something, but to save you **to** something. God has a good plan for your life, and passages like this show us that God's plan for our life goes so far beyond what we can imagine here and now. God wants to do good to you, but not just in this life. God wants to do good to you for all eternity.

This is a truth that was so important for Paul and the early church to understand. Many of them were suffering because they were followers of Christ. But they could face every persecution of this life knowing that God had more in store for them. Not just more, God had everything. God had blessed them with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. There is nothing of His goodness that he will hold back from His people; He wants them to have it all.

It's a plan that He has had for a long time. God knew the purpose for your life, even before the foundation of the world. Nothing we do can add or take away from that promise. All we can do is accept the gift He has for us.

Verse 6 tells us the reason for this all. It is to the praise of the glory of His grace. The goodness that God wants to pour out on us isn't because we are deserving, it's because His grace is just that good. As we spend eternity closely with God, being blessed by the goodness of His presence, it will all be an incredible testimony of the Grace that God has shown us through Jesus Christ.

Let's tell our Lord, 'thank you' today for bringing us near to God through the cross.

Day 7:

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11:

- 1) Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you.
- 2) For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night.
- 3) While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape.
- 4) But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief.
- 5) For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.
- 6) So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.
- 7) For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, are drunk at night.
- 8) But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, having put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation.
- 9) For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,
- 10) who died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep we might live with him.
- 11) Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing.

Have you ever had trouble sleeping because you had something exciting, or even scary, planned for the next day? This happened to me a lot as a kid, and still happens sometimes as an adult.

As a kid, every year our family would take a week-long trip to the beach. My dad always made us get up at 4 in the morning to leave so we would get to the beach as early as possible. Any other day, if you would have asked 10-year-old me to get up at 4 in the morning, it would have been a disaster. But for some reason on that day, I had no problem at all with it. In fact, I remember springing out of bed when the time came with barely the need for an alarm. The excitement was so great that sleep mattered very little in that moment.

Continued from page 8

I can't help but think of times like that when I read this passage from 1 Thessalonians 5. The foundation of this passage is that Jesus wants to be with us. In verses 9-10 it says that the reason Christ died for us is that we might live with him, no matter what. Paul is telling us to look forward to that day when Christ comes to make us His own. For those who know Christ, and are known by Him, it is such a day of excitement and hope. Paul tells us to be awake, focused, and vigilant as we wait for that day's arrival. I can't help but think that if we truly understand what it means that we will "live with Him," we would all be just like I was on those beach trip mornings; full of excitement, rebuking sleep, and ready to experience the happiness of that day.

Sadly, that day is not a day of excitement for everyone. For multitudes of people, it is a day of fear and wrath. Even worse, as it says in verse 3, most of them are not aware that this day is quickly approaching. They are going about their daily lives, convincing themselves that everything is fine, but that day will come like a thief that appears in the night.

There is only one way to change that day from a day of fear to a day of excitement. Jesus is the way. All we can do is believe in Jesus to save us from the wrath of God we deserve. He died and rose again, not only to save us from that wrath, but that no matter what, we might live with Him for all time. Be ready for that day by calling out to Him.

Followers of Christ, be excited! Let the excitement of that day keep us focused on the work that God has for us here and now.

Day 8:

Psalm 96:1-6

- 1) Oh sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth!
- 2) Sing to the LORD, bless his name; tell of his salvation from day to day.
- 3) Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous works among all the peoples!
- 4) For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; he is to be feared above all gods.
- 5) For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
- 6) Splendor and majesty are before him; strength and beauty are in his sanctuary.

I remember early in ministry I was leading a Bible study. I don't remember the exact passage we were studying, but I remember that it spoke about how God brought us into a relationship with Himself. In getting ready for that class, I planned to teach that day that not only did God desire a relationship with us, but that was the whole reason God had created us. Feeling pretty confident in that conclusion, I went to teach my Bible study.

At one point, I remember very clearly asking the group, "Why did God create us"? (Though I felt like I already had the answer). Without hesitation one person quickly raised their hand, "God created us to glorify Him."

I remember feeling like I had walked into a brick wall of truth. I immediately knew they were right and that I was only 'kind of' right. Even though my answer wasn't wrong, I had missed the even more simple truth. Did God create us for a relationship with Him? Absolutely. But the foundation of that relationship is the glorification of God. Whether it is our blessings, or life, or the salvation of our soul, everything we have is from Jesus and is for the purpose of glorifying Him. When I read psalms like this, it is a reminder to me that I exist to worship Him!

Psalm 96 is a call for God's people to give Him the worship that is due His name. But even more than just worshipping in the temple, the psalmist says to "Declare His glory among the nations." Our worship shouldn't be a secret, but instead it should be well known that our lives are all about our Lord Jesus. The nations are in a desperate place. They are giving their worship to worthless gods and they have misunderstood the very reason for their existence. They have given what belongs only to God to the worthless idols of their lives.

So, when we as the people of God worship Him, we are testifying to the nations about who He is! We are saying, "I exist to glorify Him." In fact, if Christ lives in us, and we are allowing Him to change us and use us, we can't help but bring Him glory. Today, because of who God is, and what He has done, let's worship Him, and glorify Him before the lost.

Day 9:

Psalm 96:7-13 7) Ascribe to the LORD, O families of the peoples, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength!

8) Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts!

9) Worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness; tremble before him, all the earth!

10) Say among the nations, "The LORD reigns! Yes, the world is established; it shall never be moved; he will judge the peoples with equity."

11) Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it;

12) let the field exult, and everything in it! Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy

13) before the LORD, for he comes, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness, and the peoples in his faithfulness.

Have you ever been in a worship service where you didn't speak the main language of the people you were with? It is sort of a strange experience. You can't understand what is being said, but you can see, hear, and even feel the worship going on around you. You don't know the language but you can join in and worship together. It sort of stops you and makes you think about worship in a different way.

Worship is a universal truth of all creation! Not just one group of people is meant to worship God, but all groups. God called all men, from all nations, rich or poor, black or white, to worship and glorify him. Even all of creation exists to the glorification of our Lord Jesus. I love this passage when it talks about the sea, fields, trees, and forests singing to God. And why does it say they are singing? They are singing because "He comes to judge the earth." The image here is that creation is not just worshipping God, but also rejoicing in the plan of God. It reminds me of this passage from Romans 8:19-21 that says:

19) For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God.

20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope

21) that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

When we think about God's incredible plan of redemption, it's something that is just too big for our tiny brains to comprehend. This is the plan that God has had from the very beginning; to make all things new and to deal with evil once and for all. It's a plan so big, and so mind blowing, that all of creation is singing with anticipation to see it take place. Sort of like waiting for the birth of a child, the coming of our Lord Jesus is just too big a miracle to understand.

Let's worship our Lord Jesus today as we look forward with assurance and gladness to the day of His coming.

Day 10:

Galatians 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree").

The Lord told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil they would surely die. When they ate, they didn't stop breathing and fall to the ground. However, they very much experienced the curse of death. Immediately they recognized they were naked and they felt shame and guilt for the first time. The voice that once brought them comfort now caused them fear as they tried to hide from God, and the couple that had lived in complete security had now taken on the role of a victim as they placed blame elsewhere for what had happened. They had lived in complete blessing and now they experienced the curse of death; separation from God. The curse is evident daily; people die, people fight, steal, kill, and live with a 'look out for self' mentality. Romans 8 teaches that even creation longs to be set free from the bondage that was caused by the curse.

There were many ways Christ could have been slain. However, it had been predetermined from the foundation of the earth that His death would be by crucifixion. This was so that He might become the curse for us and bring the children of God into His glorious liberty. 2 Corinthians 5:21 doesn't just say that Christ paid for sin, it says **He became sin**. This passage doesn't just say He paid for the curse, it says He became a curse. Crucifixion was reserved for the worst of criminals. It was intended to inflict great pain and to bring intense shame on the one being crucified.

When we reflect on passages like this, it can help us understand the horrible cost of sin and also the indescribable love the Father was willing to pay to redeem us from the curse.

Day 11:

Matthew 1:21 And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.

In the devotion from Revelation 13:8, we established the fact that Christ's death wasn't something which was thought of after sin entered the world. Before God began the process of creation, He knew the ones He created in His image would rebel against Him. He also knew He would come to this world and die on a cross in order to save His creation.

In the closing verse of the gospel of John, John makes the statement that if all Jesus had done was written down, he supposed the world couldn't contain the books. Before going any further, stop and make a mental list of some of the things which Jesus did.

But notice what Gabriel didn't say when he appeared to Joseph to announce the birth of Christ. He didn't say: *He will feed the hungry, He will love the outcast, He will raise the dead, He will teach, He will show us how to live, and the list could go on.* Jesus did all of these things, and all of them were very important and part of the purposes of God, BUT His ultimate mission was to save His people from their sins.

The cross was in the heart and plan of God before creation, and now as the incarnation is being announced, the cross is the foundation of the reason Christ was entering creation. We must understand that while there is much in Scripture teaching us about numerous things, when the message of the cross gets moved from the center to the fringes of the faith, we are no longer aligned with God's agenda. He came to save His people from their sins, and that could not happen by people following Christ's example. It required the death, burial, and resurrection of the unblemished Son of God. As we move towards the season we call Easter, be very intentional to focus on the work of Calvary. Without that reality we would still be dead in our sins.

Day 12:

Isaiah 53:5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

Four times in this verse it speaks of Jesus taking our place. The incredible thing is, He didn't do so because He had to, but because He wanted to. It was in the plan and purpose of the Godhead, from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8) even before creation, that God the Son would put on flesh and come to take the place and pay the penalty of sin for those created in His image.

The Hebrew word wounded means to pierce and to profane. The word bruised means beat down, to oppress, to crush. The word chastisement is often translated as punishment. Of course, when we hear the word stripes, we think of the whip, but the word actually refers to all of His wounds and injuries.

While the words transgressions and iniquities certainly refer to sin, they don't so much describe sin as they do its consequences – which is separation. Sin separates us from God, but Jesus came to reconcile us back to God.

Now, let's make this verse personal. He was pierced and profaned to heal the consequences of my sin. He was beat down and crushed to keep me from being separated from the Father. He was punished so that I may have peace with God. He was beaten, wounded, and injured so that I may be healed in every area of my life.

Holy Spirit, impress this into my heart and mind today. Help me to rejoice in your amazing mercy and love that would cause you to give your Son to take my punishment and give me His blessings.

Day 13:

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." Luke 19:10

These words were spoken by our Lord. He was always laser focused on His mission. He knew who He was and why He had come to the earth. He was also completely clear that the mission of seeking and saving the lost was His Father's will for Him. On more than one occasion He corrects someone who tries to interfere with that purpose. He was so focused on His mission that, at times, He strongly rebuked those who tried to hinder His work. One of those times involved one of His closest friends, Peter.

Matthew 16:21 From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day. [22] Then Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him, saying, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" [23] But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men."

I imagine Peter tried to stop Jesus from doing this because he deeply loved Him and didn't want Him to suffer. Perhaps since Peter was an eyewitness to the kingdom work that Christ was doing, he may have thought, Lord, if this happens to you, who will heal the outcast? Who will feed the hungry, who will raise the dead, who will preach the gospel to the hopeless, who will make the blind to see? Peter understood that Jesus was doing something no one else had ever done. But Jesus knew, as important as this was, the most important thing was yet to be done. He was to die for the sins of the world, be buried, and be raised on the 3rd day that the lost may be saved.

We, as individuals, and as churches, can be like Peter. We can do many wonderful Kingdom works, but if our main task isn't seeking and saving the lost, we aren't fulfilling Christ's call on our lives.

Day 14:

1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God....

For Christ suffered once for sins: When one reads about the sacrificial system in the Old Testament, it is the story of continual sacrifices because there was no sacrifice sufficient to take away the penalty and power of sin. BUT THEN COMES JESUS! His was not a continual sacrifice, but a one-time sacrifice, because He was the sinless and complete sacrifice. While His sacrifice was a one-time sacrifice, it had, and still has, a continuing effect. The eternal power of His sacrifice still cleanses us of our sins today.

The just for the unjust: The righteous for the unrighteous, the holy for the unholy, the worthy for the unworthy, the sinless for the sinful. Before the moment of one's salvation comes the awareness of one's sinfulness. Many church people will never be saved because in comparing themselves to others, they view themselves as good. So, before salvation comes our awareness of how sinful we are, BUT then there comes the wonderful revelation of the perfection of Christ. Although we were dead in trespasses and sins, He, the just one, made us right with God.

That He might bring us to God: All humanity needs to be brought to God because our sins separated us from Him. Our sin brought death, separation, and enmity. He came to destroy all of these and make us children and friends of God.

1. There is but one sacrifice for all time.
2. He is the perfect sacrifice for sinful humanity.
3. Because of Him we can have peace with God.

PRAISE THE LORD!

Day 15:

Romans 8:37 Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

We all want to be conquerors! This verse tells us that not only are we conquerors, but we are **more than** conquerors. How awesome is that! However, it is vital that we pay close attention to the 7 “these things” that are listed in verse 35, which are 1) tribulation 2) distress 3) persecution 4) famine 5) nakedness 6) peril and 7) sword. If you were describing a situation in which you were more than a conqueror, these 7 terms most likely would not be included in the description. It is passages like this that give testimony to just how radical the message of the cross really is.

When Christ died on the cross, none of His followers were celebrating. They didn't for a single moment think their Master had just become more than a conqueror. They thought all was lost. But the economy of the Kingdom of God is different from ours. The disciples saw defeat, but God's plan was being perfectly carried out. God knew every step of His plan. The crucifixion of the sinless Lamb of God was going to open the door to resurrection life which was going to offer forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life to each of us.

Many preachers promote the teaching that getting what we want is evidence of being more than a conqueror, and anything less means you aren't walking in the full blessing of God. However, we can confidently say that in Christ I am more than a conqueror.

Day 16:

Colossians 1:24 I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church,

And fill up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. WHAT? Is Paul saying that the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ is lacking something, that it didn't provide what we need? Absolutely not. To seek to add anything to the finished work of Christ is blasphemy. So, what is meant by his suffering to fill up in my flesh what is lacking?

The last commandment of Christ before His ascension was to take the gospel into all the world. As we read the teachings of Christ to His followers, He often talked to them about counting the cost to follow Him. Jesus' sacrifice was completely sufficient to save us. However, as his followers, we will experience suffering and affliction as we seek to be His ambassadors carrying the gospel into all the world.

Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; [13] but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 1 Peter 4:12 -13

We, too, are called to fill up in our flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ.

Day 17:

And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. Hebrews 9:27-28

Huey Long, the notorious politician who was governor of Louisiana before he went on to serve in the U.S. Senate, was well known for being rather harsh with people. One day, a fellow walked up to Long and said, "Sir, could I have a few minutes of your time?" Long took a look at the man and said, "I don't have thirty minutes for Jesus Christ, much less ten minutes for you." The next day, Huey Long was shot by an assassin's bullet and died two days later.

Some might think affronting God is a good idea. But there will come a time when each and every one of us will have to face our Maker. It may be sooner or it may be later, but it is definitely going to happen. And on that day, all that will matter is whether God declares us innocent or guilty. Those who've humbly submitted to Christ will receive His forgiveness. But for those who in their haughtiness have denied Christ, they will undergo judgment... a judgment that is permanent.

How you deal with Christ today will determine your eternal destiny. Don't have a puffed-up spirit. Submit humbly to Christ every day and trust Him to take away your sins!

The story of Huey was found on Powerpoint Ministries with Jack Graham at Powerpoint Ministries

Day 18:

Hebrews 10:7,10 [7] "Then I said, 'Behold, I have come - In the volume of the book it is written of Me - To do Your will, O God.'" [10] By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

As followers of Christ, we must focus on His perfection and sufficiency. When the LORD placed Adam & Eve in the garden, He made clear to them His will. Satan tempted them and lied to them. He still tells the same lies today: 1) God didn't mean what He said, and 2) His will isn't the best for you. They believed the lie of the evil one and they chose their will instead of their creator's will. As a result, spiritual death became their plight and the fallen nature was inherited by all of humanity. The first Adam chose rebellion, the second Adam, the Lord Jesus, chose obedience.

Christ was totally focused on His mission, which was to do the will of the Father. He was tempted by Satan, just as Adam and Eve were, but He said no to the father of all lies and consistently chose the Father's will over everything else. The amazing thing is that we were rewarded because of His obedience. We have been sanctified (made holy) through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all! Are you holy? If you are in Christ, you are declared positionally holy in Him. Praise God!

Day 19: Romans 5:17 For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, **much more** those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.

Through one man's offense death reigned. We see the reality of this every day. Someone else we know dies of a disease - death reigns. A marriage breaks up - death reigns. People steal from others - death reigns. One group of people despise another because they look different - death reigns. IS THERE ANY HOPE? *Emphatically yes.* That hope is found in the **MUCH MORE** of this verse which is made available through the One who died to destroy the curse, who was buried, and who rose victorious over sin, death, the devil, and everything that exalts itself against the Kingdom of God.

Some seem to think that reigning in life only refers to when we go to heaven. While we will reign in complete fullness at that time, Paul is saying reigning begins by receiving the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness in the here and now. Reigning comes from living out our position in Christ.

We transition from death to life by recognizing our needs and receiving His supply. John 1:12 says "as many as receive Him to them He gave the power to become children of God." Praise God, we don't receive religion, but the Lord of Lords and King of Kings. In receiving Him, we receive THE ABUNDANCE OF GRACE AND THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS. By understanding who we are in Him is where we learn to reign in life. We reign by understanding that death does not have dominion over us. We share in Jesus' victory. We reign by understanding that God's very nature is one of abundant (*an overflowing, a great measure, more than necessary*) grace. He delights to give us that which we need to reign. We reign by understanding that righteousness isn't something we earn, but it is a gift we receive. Don't rush past this. Go back and reread the verse. None of us will reign until we receive the promise of God that righteousness is a gift to be received instead of something to be earned. In understanding the gift of righteousness, we enter into His rest and, therefore, reign in and through Christ. *Lord, help us to understand and walk out the powerful truth of this verse. In Jesus' Name. Amen*

Day 20:

Genesis 49: [8] "Judah, you are he whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies; Your father's children shall bow down before you.

[9] Judah is a lion's whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

[10] The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.

[11] Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey's colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

In Luke 24 Jesus is walking with two disciples on the road to Emmaus. Verse 27 tells us this: And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Wouldn't you have loved to have been there for that? Today's passage could have certainly been one He shared with them.

Let's consider some of the ways we see this prophecy of Christ demonstrated in the Scriptures:

V8 - Christ was from the tribe of Judah (praise). He is the One whom not only His brothers would praise, but whom all of creation will, as well. It also says "your father's children shall worship you" - what a prophecy of Jesus.

V8 - Your hand will be on the neck of your enemies. Psalm 2 is one of many places in Scripture that assures us that Christ will have victory over His enemies. Righteousness will win, evil will lose.

V9 - Judah is a lion's whelp. 3 times this verse refers to Him as a lion. In Revelation 5 He is revealed as the Lion of the tribe of Judah.

V10 - The scepter shall not depart from Judah. The scepter represents power and rulership. The One spoken of in today's passage will rule as King of Kings and Lord of Lords for all eternity. Many seem to fear what is revealed in the Revelation.

V11 - And as we read verse 11 of Genesis 49, we see the foreshadowing that from Judah will come the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Many people, even Christians, speak of how the book of Revelation is scary. Certainly, the Revelation reveals a time of much devastation and judgment. However, let's consider that every prophecy of Christ from today's passage is referenced to at some place in the Revelation. For the lost, Revelation should be very scary. For the child of God, the Revelation reveals the ultimate victory of the Lion and the Lamb and because of the cross we, too, share in that victory.

Day 21:

Matthew 26:39 He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."

Three times this scene is repeated in Matthew 26. Most likely you've seen the picture of Jesus praying in the garden that portrays Him as neatly dressed and calmly composed. Even the moon beams are glistening over His body. While this may be a peaceful picture to look upon, beyond the fact that He is praying, none of the rest of it is reality. Jesus has His face in the dirt pleading for His life. His soul is in deep agony. He continues to cry out to the Father; **"If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will."**

Did the Father desire to watch as His Son endured the hell of the cross? Of course not! But it comes down to the statement; **"If it is possible..."** If it is possible for people to be saved some other way, if it is possible for them to be forgiven by their good works, if it is possible for them to make sacrifices for their own sins, if it is possible for them to perform certain religious acts, then let this cup pass from me. When people speak as though they can do things by their power to be reconciled to God, they are dismissing the work of the cross.

Are you trusting completely in the finished work of Christ?

Day 22:

Philippians 2:[4] Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. [5] Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Most of these devotions are focused on the cross as they relate to the life and ministry of Christ. The message of the cross of Christ is certainly the foundation of Christianity. However, if we don't take hold of the truth of what it means for us to live the cross life, we are missing the heart of what it means to be a follower of Christ. It is only when we take seriously the call of taking up our cross and following Him that much of the New Testament makes sense. Ephesians 4:32 teaches us to forgive one another as God for Christ's sake forgave us. In order for God to forgive us, it required the cross of Christ. It was an indescribable cost. Forgiving others is costly. Our mind tells us the offender doesn't deserve forgiveness. However, as His followers, we have embraced His cross knowing we don't deserve forgiveness. Now He calls us to take up our cross, to count the cost. We don't forgive others because they deserve it, but because of the message of the cross. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus. Philippians 2:5

Day 23:

Philippians 2:[4] Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. [5] Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, [6] who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, [7] but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

This is a continuation of yesterday's devotion where we look at the principle that, as followers of Christ, we are called to live the cross life. Philippians 2:4-11 makes it abundantly clear that Jesus knew who He was. He was Creator, He was Immanuel - God with us. However, he voluntarily laid aside His rights for our sake. Not only did he become a man but He chose to humble Himself and to make Himself of no reputation. He took on the form of a bondservant.

So, when it says let this same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, He is calling us to quit demanding our rights and to seek the interest of others. This is saying because we are followers of His, we choose to follow His example, we choose to take up our cross because this is the life to which we are called. We can never do this in our power. We can do it when we are secure in who we are in Him. We can live the cross life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Day 24:

1 Corinthians 15:13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. [14] And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty.

On many occasions when Scripture mentions the cross, it is referring to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Without the resurrection, Christ would have been just one of a great multitude who were crucified for numerous reasons. It is imperative that we never forget that Christ told His followers that He would be crucified **and that He would rise again**. There are those, (actually probably vast numbers of people) who say that Christ was a great man, a wonderful teacher, an amazing example, and someone who should be admired. Yet they say they don't believe that He rose from the dead. If Christ didn't rise from the dead, He was either delusional – or He intentionally lied – on multitudes of occasions.

The Christian faith, and your eternal destiny, rests on the resurrection of Christ. We shouldn't be surprised there are those who claim to admire Him, yet deny His resurrection. Satan isn't concerned if people only believe in a historical Christ. He fears those who believe in the reality of the resurrected Lord and all that His resurrection secures. Praise God we are delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of our Father. Some day we will walk by sight in the fullness of His presence, but until then, we will worship Him and declare that He is the victorious King of Kings and Lord of Lords.