



HOLY WEEK

Written by Carrie Wright



It's Holy Week.

I invite you to take a journey this week as we prepare our hearts for Resurrection Sunday. We'll walk through some of the events of Jesus' last week on earth before His death and resurrection.

As we prepare for the celebration of Easter, may we never forget all that it cost and the redemption we have been given.

I invite you to go deeper as you study scripture surrounding Jesus' last week.

Carrie

Palm Sunday

Read Zechariah 9:9-10, Psalm 118:25-26, Matthew 21:1-11, Luke 19:28-44

Palm Sunday. Shouts of Hosanna! It was the literal cry for help as Jesus entered. There's cause for celebration and a somberness knowing what's to come.

Even as Jesus came down the Mount of Olives on that young donkey, the crowds were aware of the symbolism and meaning. This was what the scriptures had foretold. This was who they had been promised. The Messiah!

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.” Zechariah 9:9

And so they spread out palm branches, a national symbol for Israel, and they cried out, “Hoshea’na!” which translates “Save now!” The words rang familiar from the Old Testament scriptures they knew so well.

“Lord, save us! Lord, grant us success! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. From the house of the Lord we bless you.” Psalms 118:25-26

They recognized Him as Messiah yet missed Him as the Lamb of God.

They were looking for a King. More specifically, they were expecting Him to lead a revolt against the Roman rule they were under. They believed He had come to lead the rebellion that would alleviate their oppression. In their search for earthly freedom, they missed the eternal significance of why He came. He didn't come to fight an earthly battle. He came to redeem the world by conquering death.

This isn't just Palm Sunday, it's the Shabbat before Passover known as the Great Sabbath. This day remembers and honors the day the lamb was set aside before the first Passover in Egypt.

If they had realized this then as Messiah entered into the city, they may have understood the full meaning of Jesus, the Lamb of God, being set aside for all mankind.

It's the beginning of Holy Week. Today is about remembrance. It's about preparation. It's an opportunity for us to experience the redemption and freedom we have through Jesus, the lamb of God who took away the sins of the world! But it's also a call not to miss - or misunderstand - Him. Today we shout “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”

Holy Week Monday

Read Luke 19:41-48, Matthew 21:12-17

This was it! Jesus was the long-awaited king. Their conquest was coming. Their deliverance was on the way.

They weren't completely wrong; deliverance was coming, but not the way they expected.

There's a great misunderstanding in the way we've portrayed the story of Jesus' triumphal entry. The crowd cheering and singing hosanna simply misunderstood his conquest. They thought this was inciting war that would lead to overthrowing Rome. They didn't understand His next steps or the events that would follow.

Sometimes we think we know what He's up to and we misread it altogether. Sometimes we think we know the outcome and we get it completely wrong. He is God and we are not. The way this week would unfold for Him was certainly different than anyone had expected.

Jesus had just entered the city, weeping as the colt carried Him. He knew they didn't understand Him. He knew His message of peace and ultimate deliverance wasn't being received. He also knew the events that would unfold this week.

"It is written," he said to them, "My house will be a house of prayer' but you have made it a den of robbers." Luke 19:45

He overturned tables in what appeared to be a fit of rage and yet we come to understand this as the launching point of the prosecution against Him. Jesus raises the issue of His authority through the cleansing of the temple and this action catapults the plot against him into motion.

"Yet they could not find any way to do it, because all the people hung on His words."
Vs. 48

When I think about this Holy Week, it brings me to places that call me deeper into all this week represents. This verse alone calls to a place of wondering about my own conviction to hang on His words. Am I following so closely to Him that I can't get enough of Him?

Sometimes we want to accuse Him when bad things happen or things go unexplained. But if we are walking so closely with Him, hanging on every word, there's still a chance we won't fully grasp what He's doing. It's not our job to understand. It's our calling to follow and trust Him.

Holy Week Tuesday

Read Matthew 26:6-13

“While Jesus was in Bethany in the home of Simon the Leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster jar of very expensive perfume, which she poured on his head as he was reclining at the table.” Matthew 26:6-7

An act of faith. It symbolized He was the Messiah. Maybe she had been listening to His words. Maybe she understood there wasn't much time. In these moments, she acknowledged He was who He said He was.

An act of worship. Out of reverence she bows before Him. Out of worship, she washes His feet. Humbling herself, she gives Him worship for His place as Lord.

An act of love. It was said the perfume was worth a year's wages. To her, He was Lord and nothing was too costly to give fully to Him.

An act of respect. A very personal relationship with Jesus reaches this pivotal moment of her acknowledging Him as Lord over her life. Yes, she knew Him. She had heard Him teach. She had followed Him. But this was the day she made it publicly known that He was her Lord.

An act of sacrifice. It was preparation for His death. Could she have known? We can only speculate but the symbolism of Jesus being anointed like this was preparation for the sacrifice yet to come.

While the disciples scoffed with limited vision at the 'waste' of the perfume she used, Jesus commended what she did as a "beautiful thing," and her story of making Jesus Lord of her life is part of His final week on earth.

The Lamb had already been chosen. We are given the opportunity to choose Him as well. I pray you won't let this week pass by without coming to the point of acknowledging His sacrifice for our sin and His resurrection to conquer death.

We deserve death but we are given the opportunity to have eternal life through Jesus Christ if we will confess Him as Lord. Don't miss it. Don't miss Him.



Holy Week Wednesday

Read Matthew 26:14-35

“Then one of the twelve - the one called Judas Iscariot - went to the chief priests and asked, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver him over to you?” So they counted out for him thirty pieces of silver. From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand him over.” Matthew 26:14-16

We know him as the betrayer. We know him for his sin. We know his price. We know his turning point. We know that all it took was 30 pieces of silver. We know him for the guilt he bore that caused him to take his own life. We know him for being the one who played the role in Jesus’ story of handing him over to the Pharisees.

All throughout Jesus’ life and ministry the Pharisees were there. They were listening, watching, plotting. They wanted a way to shut him down. Judas became that way.

If I’m honest, I’m quick to judge Judas. I’m quick to put him in a category of the worst of sinners. I act as though I could never come close to the level of his betrayal. On my best days I want to believe I am as strong as Peter on whom the church was built. I like to forget on my worst days that even Peter denied Jesus. But certainly I couldn’t be seen as a Judas. May we never forget that it could have been any one of us.

Judas had a front row seat to Jesus’ ministry. No doubt he watched and even took part in His miracles. He was right there passing out baskets of bread and fish and watching it continue to multiply. He watched the demons be cast out and the blind man gain his sight. He witnessed healing. But at some point the enemy crept in. Was it pride? Was it deceit? Was it judgement? Was it unbelief? It could have been all of those things, but the enemy saw the opening and he slipped in and began planting seeds.

In this Holy Week of reflection, we can’t forget that people played a part in Jesus’ story. God uses people. The everyday, ordinary, unusual and sometimes unlikely people are part of His plan. Make no mistake, He can and will accomplish His will without us but in His infinite plan, He chose to give us free will and we get to choose. We get to choose to accept Him or reject Him. We get to be part of His story, if we choose, but we also get to choose our own way. Help us, God.

Everyone has their price. We all have a breaking point that is vulnerable to the attack of the enemy. This is the place we must guard against. Pride and faith cannot intersect.

When I think about this week and all the events that took place, I want to be reminded of how easy it was for Judas to fall. I want to safeguard my heart against the attack of the enemy. He seeks whom he can devour. I don’t want it to be me.

Holy Week Thursday

Read Matthew 26:36-68

“Those who had arrested Jesus took him to Caiaphas, the high priest, where the teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. But Peter followed him at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest... The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for false evidence against Jesus so they could put him to death. But they did not find any, though many false witnesses came forward.” Matthew 26:57-59

The corruption of backroom politics. Things done in secrecy and deceit. Make no mistake, this wasn't in the middle of the crowded day. No, this was anything but public.

His arrest came at night in the seclusion of the garden. The trial also took place in the dark, at night, likely at the home of the Chief Priest. They didn't want the Jewish people to know because they loved and adored Jesus. This was the mafia of Jesus' time plotting in secret. They were corrupt, incorrigible, and ruthless, and they wanted Jesus dead and gone. They feared he would lead an insurrection or rebellion against Rome. Jealousy, insecurity and fear drove their corruption and deceit. An innocent man with a twisted accusation.

This wasn't just an arrest. Jesus was given the sentence of death. And not just any death: crucifixion. This was the kind of death reserved for terrorists. The Chief Priest and Sanhedrin not only wanted him dead; they wanted to send a message to any of his followers. They wanted to make sure his followers knew the cause he came to lead would die with him.

So much darkness. So much deceit. So much corruption. So much we can't even make sense of. Yet it was all part of the providential plan. I see in scripture over and over where God uses broken, sinful people. This seems to be no exception. God's perfect plan of redemption involved the corruption of those He sent His Son to save. He used even the evil to accomplish His plan of eternal good.

Even as Jesus broke the bread, He knew the brokenness He would endure to provide healing for each of us who accepts His gift of salvation.

This week is meant to call to mind all that we want to remember about this week. We grieve for what He went through. We carry the gravity of it all. We rejoice for what it all means for us and the salvation of our souls.



Good Friday

Read Matthew 27:11-56

It was the darkest day in history.

Jesus had been betrayed, beaten, mocked, bruised, his mortal body unrecognizable, and nailed to a cross.

There he hung with an audience of scoffers and mockers who couldn't have known how much he loved them. His accusers were the ones he came to save. His betrayers the ones he sought after.

Today is meant to be a somber and humbling reminder of the price he paid. He didn't just die. He was brutally crucified. Murdered for crimes he didn't commit and sins he never knew, except to take upon the weight of every soul who had ever lived and who would ever come to be on this earth. Oh how he loves us.

The weight of this day representing anything good can only come from understanding Romans 8:28, *"We know in all things, God works together for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose."*

We know what's coming. We know what Sunday represents. We understand He had to die in order to cover every single person's sin. We realize His death tore the veil that separated us from a perfect and Holy God. His death made way for life.

We can't just skip to Sunday. We can't pass over what today holds. This wasn't just death; this was torture. Agony. Innocence lost. A life as the cost. The sentence of persecuting death as if he were a terrorist. The cross represents death. Crucifixion. Torture. Torn flesh. A pierced side. Nails ripping into muscle. Thorns piercing his skull. The cross carries every single sin for all of humanity, wrongfully and yet willingness taken on by Jesus Himself.

The gravity in His death brings a solemnness to this day. The good in it is His willingness to die - for you, for me. The good is He made a way for us to have eternal life. When there is nothing good in us, and while we were nothing but sinners, Christ died for us.

Today we reflect on the cross, the crucifixion and all it carries for us. We sit in this wrestle of solemnness as we remember His death. We recognize our need for His salvation. We wait for Sunday...



The Saturday Before Easter

Read Matthew 27:57-66

It's Saturday.

I wonder how many couldn't sleep because they were overcome with grief. Having watched Jesus die such a brutal death, I can only imagine being wrecked with emotions. Devastation. Anger. Complete loss. They must have felt it in the depth of their souls.

To see the sun rise on Saturday surely couldn't have brought any sign of hope knowing Jesus lay lifeless in a sealed tomb.

Friday brought the shouts of the mob cheering for his death. Friday brought the earthquake that tore the temple curtains in two. Friday brought the opening of graves that rocked the earth. Friday saw the sun blocked from the sky as the unexplained darkness in the middle of the day signaled the end coming. The earth shook as the breath exited his lungs for the last time and with his last breath, an unimaginable silence was about to hang over the earth.

That Saturday, silence was the only thing heard. Nothing. No word from God. No movement from Jesus. Nothing but silence.

We don't tend to do well with silence. Silence torments us. Silence leaves us guessing. But this silence doesn't mean God isn't at work.

We know Sunday is coming, but they did not. They didn't know on that silent Saturday that hope had not been lost. It is a reminder to me that no matter how hopeless the situation seems, God's silence doesn't mean He isn't still at work. Have you ever been in the midst of hurt and confusion where nothing makes sense?

In the midst of the confusion, when nothing makes sense, it's hard to trust. It's hard to see. They didn't know Sunday was coming. They didn't know the other side of the story. They only had the silent somberness of Saturday.

Today we remember the silence while we hold onto hope.

Resurrection Sunday



Read Matthew 28:1-10

“We stand between two proclamations: God has come and Come Lord Jesus. The first grounds our confidence that the second will be answered. The life, death and resurrection shape our hope in the return, reign and renewal that is to come.”

We rejoice in the death and resurrection of Jesus because it represents the Living Hope we have with life eternal. We have this hope because of Him, by Him and through Him.

This is also where we find the ability to rejoice in suffering, to persevere in affliction. The internal conflict bears resemblance to the groans of the earth longing to be whole and complete.

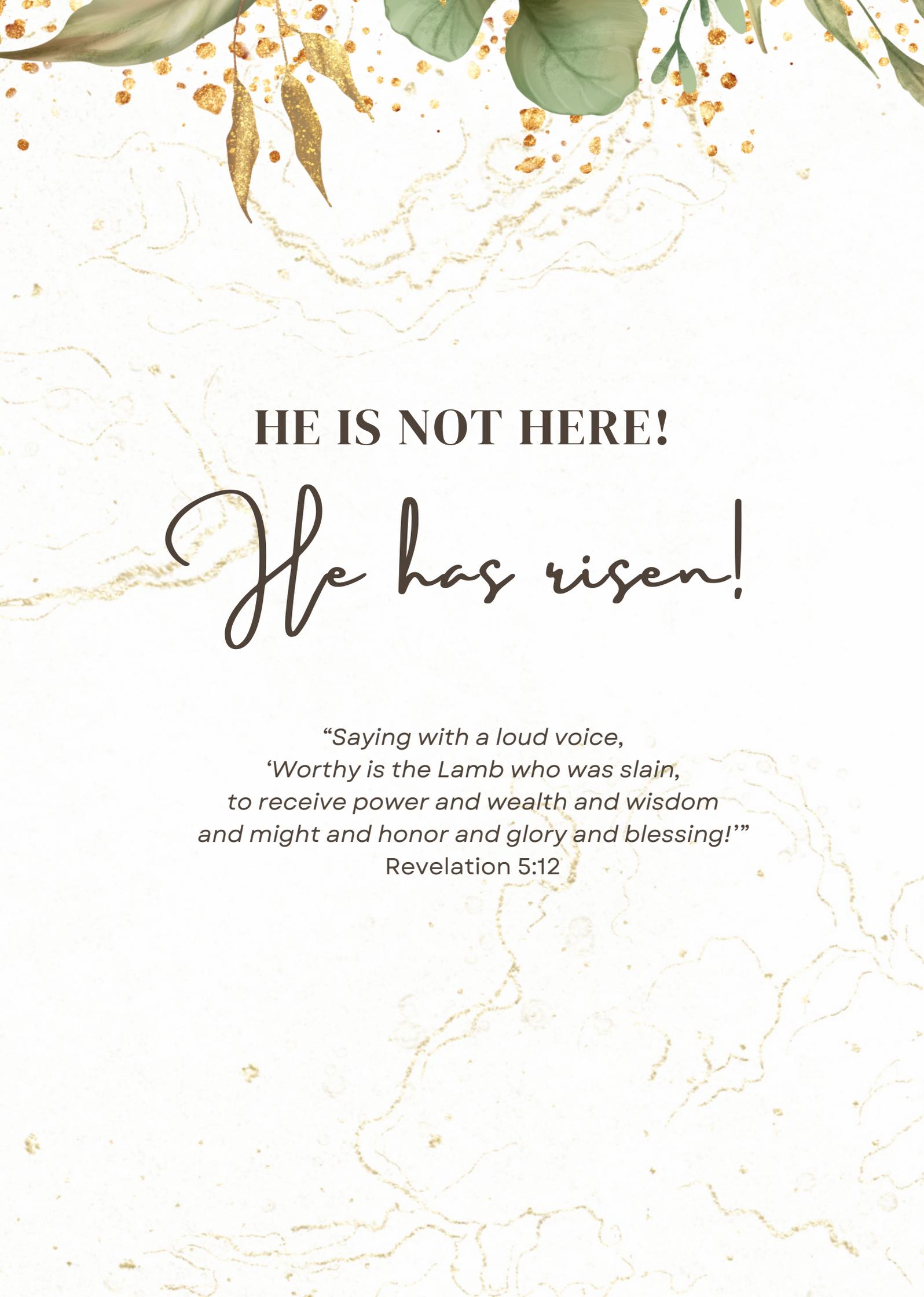
“He is not here; he has risen, just as he said.” Matthew 28:6

The difference one day makes can change everything. Today we stand in the power of a resurrected Savior. We can live in freedom from the condemnation of our sin because of what happened to overcome death. We can receive eternal salvation because of Jesus’ sacrifice. All because of the difference of one day.

This isn’t just a single day in history. It’s the cornerstone of every single day of our lives when we accept this gift of salvation. It’s the day that changes every other day of our life when we live and walk in this freedom. It’s the day that changes every day we face hardship and challenge because we put our hope in the eternal, not the momentary things we face. It’s the day that reminds us in our weakest, we have the same power that raised Christ from the dead.

It’s the difference of one day and yet it’s the power of this moment that changes every other day for us.

Today we live as His redeemed when we’ve received His gift of salvation. Today we walk in the power of the resurrection. Today we continue the celebration because it’s the day that changes every other day, today and for eternity. Thank you, Jesus.



HE IS NOT HERE!

He has risen!

*“Saying with a loud voice,
‘Worthy is the Lamb who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom
and might and honor and glory and blessing!’”*

Revelation 5:12