

THE *suffering*
SERVANT



2025 HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL

JESUS Christ is the most glorious and tragic figure in all of history. There was no better man, nor one who was treated with more cruelty.

And yet, it is the very suffering of Jesus that reveals God's greatest glory: "While we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

The theme of this year's devotion is *The Suffering Servant*. Each day will provide an opportunity to meditate upon:

DIFFERENT WAYS THAT JESUS SUFFERED
HOW THE OLD TESTAMENT FORESHADOWED HIS SUFFERING
HOW JESUS' SUFFERING ACCOMPLISHES SALVATION FOR YOU AND ME

Our hope is that this devotion will strengthen you by revealing just how great God's love is and the lengths to which Jesus was willing to go in order to redeem us. May that love transform us all, so that we might be his faithful followers in our culture today.

written by:
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Tips FOR FAMILIES

STEP 1

GATHER TOGETHER

Set aside a dedicated time each day for your family to come together to read God's Word. The best time is usually right after breakfast or dinner.

STEP 2

READ THE SCRIPTURE

Start each devotional by reading the designated Scripture passages aloud. Encourage each family member to take turns reading.

STEP 3

READ THE DEVOTIONAL

Recommended for parents with older children. For those with younger children, use for personal study.

STEP 4

REFLECT & DISCUSS

Use the questions provided to guide your family's discussion as you look to Christ and apply God's Word to your life.

STEP 5

PRAY TOGETHER

Conclude each devotional with the provided prayer.

PALM SUNDAY

The Suffering Servant

Nazareth was once known as the armpit of Israel. They didn't call it that, perhaps, but one of Jesus' disciples summed up the sentiment of the day: "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:19). We aren't certain of the exact population, but it was likely smaller than most American high schools—a couple hundred to two thousand residents at most. It was a backwater place no one cared to go, filled with people no one cared to know. And it was where Jesus grew up.

Depending upon the Bible translation you're reading, it may seem like the crowd is at first happily impressed with Jesus: "All spoke well of him" (Luke 4:22, ESV, NIV, etc.). The language is more ambiguous. They were speaking well, not of Jesus, but the words he spoke. And they were whispering, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22).

It was exactly as if the kid who grew up down the block had stood up to declare he was the main character in all of human history. Matthew's gospel makes it clearer, "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers? Isn't this the carpenter's son... They took offense at him" (Matt. 13:54, 57). They were amazed at his words, but they had their doubts about him. As Jesus acknowledges, "No prophet is acceptable in his hometown" (Luke 4:24).

What a tragedy their response was to him. He announced that the kingdom of God had arrived, that the promised King and Savior had come, which would mean freedom for all of them—even the other nations of the world. But doubt soon turned to anger when Jesus said that God's blessings would go to the Gentiles because they had faith: "All in the synagogue were filled with wrath" (Luke 4:28). Their hearts were like Jonah—outraged that God was gracious enough to offer salvation to Ninevah. They didn't run away like Jonah but tried to run Jesus off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29).

They should have expected exactly this and been overjoyed that the promise to Abraham was being fulfilled exactly as God had declared: "In your offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed" (Gen. 26:4). But their hearts were hardened to the good news.

When we place our faith in Jesus, that requires all our loyalty. If our relatives and friends do not share our faith, Jesus warned that this kind of response could be expected. Even if your relationships remain strong, they might repeatedly reject the gospel you have offered to them. Unfortunately, it's not uncommon for relationships to break altogether.

We can take comfort that Jesus, God's suffering servant, has experienced this pain of loss. Jesus had seen all these faces before, many looking upon him with fondness and

familiarity. Now those same faces were twisted, snarling like a beast, and contorted with hate. As Isaiah says, “He was despised and rejected by men” (Isa. 53:3).

But Jesus was willing to undergo all this so that we could be adopted into God’s own family. He was rejected, in order that we might be accepted. He has not only experienced our grief, but he has also borne our guilt and shame so that our sin might be no more. For all who trust in Jesus, the year of God’s salvation has come!

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL “GOOD NEWS” TAKEAWAY

Jesus was rejected so we could be accepted.

Have you ever had a friend hurt your feelings or be unkind toward you? How did it make you feel? Were you able to forgive them?

How can we remember God loves us even when we feel left out or rejected?

CHALLENGE

Who is someone that you know feels rejected or left out?
How can you show God’s love to that person?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you for being rejected so that we could be accepted. The people who knew you best, didn’t listen to you. When we hear your Word, help us to believe and obey. Give us the awareness and strength to love those around us the way that you love us. Amen.

MONDAY

John the Baptist Being Killed; Jesus Fleeing

It was a line out of a nightmare or a horror story: “Give me the head of John the Baptist on this serving tray.”

It's hard to imagine the impact of those words on the room. King Herod had summoned his court for a lavish feast and was charmed enough to offer a pretty girl whatever she asked. He didn't expect she would go for blood. But Herod couldn't find a conscience all of a sudden. He couldn't allow himself to be embarrassed in front of his guests and rivals. He hated John the Baptist anyway.

Herod served up God's prophet on a plate, displaying him for all to see—as if he were just one more course among a long train of delicacies.

John was born to be the herald who announced the coming of Jesus. He had warned all Judea: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2). The prophet Isaiah refers to John as “the voice crying out in the wilderness,” who tells God's people that they must “prepare the way of the Lord [and] make his paths straight” (Matt. 3:3).

Herod's feast is a dark contrast to the banquets God invites us to. In the beginning, feasts were bloodless. When God created Adam and Eve, he first invited them to eat the plants, grain, and fruit from the trees (Gen. 1:29). Even after God allowed humanity to eat meat, his people were called to have feasts of forgiveness and reconciliation. Sharing a meal was supposed to be about restoring peace with God and with one another (Lev. 3:1-3, 2 Sam. 9:7-13, etc.).

When Jesus was told that John had been killed, he went away to be by himself in a “desolate place” (Matt. 14:13). God ordained John to be a prophet crying out in the wilderness and Jesus mourned him in the wilderness just the same. Isaiah was right to call Jesus “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). But Jesus' grief gave way to compassion when he was greeted by crowds of thousands.

Here they were—the hungry sheep of Israel, whose leaders were wolves and thieves. Here were the few men and women who listened to John's call, now dragging their children in tow. Out of all the people in Judea, these few were attempting to follow after Jesus, even if some only hoped to fill their bellies.

Jesus is the one sent by a Father who knows how to give good gifts to his children, and the Father won't fail to give his children bread when they ask (Matt. 7:8-11). Jesus multiplies wine at weddings and is the bridegroom sent to invite guests to his own heavenly feast (John 2). Jesus is glad to give us our fill and is powerful enough to fill thousands from meager loaves and fish.

Jesus came into this world of grief to die so that one day men won't kill. Jesus came to defeat sin and death so that one day every wolf like Herod would bow to him. Jesus is the kind of King who offers his guests the new covenant meal, giving up his own body and blood to set his banquet before us.

Jesus calls out to the harassed and weary, come to me and eat your fill! Jesus cries out to the bloodthirsty, come to me and drink from my cup! In Christ, we can find forgiveness and receive new hearts that hunger for righteousness. Let us trust in Jesus, God's suffering servant, that we might learn to make others suffer no more.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

Jesus' kindness and provision are greater than sin and loss.

How do you respond when you don't get something that you want? What does it feel like to have something taken from you?

What happened at Herod's feast? What happened at Jesus' feast when he feed 5000 people?

Think ahead to his death on the Cross. How is Jesus' kindness and provision greater than sin and loss?

CHALLENGE

Is there someone you know who's going through a hard time? What would it look for you to show kindness to them?

PRAYER

Jesus, you are the Bread of Life. Thank you for being our Provider by giving us yourself on the Cross. Help us to be kind to others in the same way you were kind to us. Teach us how to follow you no matter what struggles or loss we face. Amen.

TUESDAY

Pharisees & Priests Plot Against Him

If we believe that faith is a matter of evidence, we are sorely mistaken. It's not that evidence cannot be helpful, but the truth about Jesus is ultimately a spiritual truth and Jesus said that faith is a gift from God (Matt. 16:17). For many, little evidence will move them toward faith in the end. But some will not believe, no matter what evidence they see.

The most extreme example of this in all of history was the religious leaders in the first century. It might be easy to think that Jesus' time wasn't so bad compared to other eras in the history of God's people. Heck, they built a golden idol about two seconds after they escaped Egypt, and the book of Judges is a wild example of one idolatry after another. But not every form of idolatry looks the same. It's possible to keep up the appearance of righteousness, while having a heart like an open grave.

It is a unique kind of evil for lawful authorities to condemn innocent men, even more than it is to let the wicked go free. And Jesus wasn't just an innocent man—he was chosen for destruction because they knew they could not turn the people away from him any longer. They could never hope to counter Jesus as the testimonies of his miracles—now even raising the dead—would spread far and wide.

Their desire to fight was proof of their spiritual condition. They were so fearful of what Rome might do if the people followed Jesus, they never thought to fear what God would do if they rejected Jesus (John 11:48). This is the true danger of idolatry—we become so consumed by our sinful desires that we become blind altogether to the things of God.

Isaiah prophesied that Jesus would be “despised,” “oppressed [and] afflicted” (Isa. 53:3, 7). He was the Lord of Glory, the God of Israel in the flesh, and yet they did not recognize him. Instead, they would seek to destroy him so that none could hear of his saving power. Indeed, they were so blind that they imagined they could defeat the Man who commands corpses to breathe.

Jesus suffered greatly because he pursued righteousness above all else. And he warned his disciples that, just as the world hated him, so too will the world continue to hate his followers (John 15:18). An inborn hatred of God will always lead us to hate the things of God. But Jesus provides us with a powerful example—an example that will conquer the world.

Jesus was willing to face persecution of the most extreme kind because he understood that his death would mean the end of sin, the destruction of death, and judgment against all who rose up against him. Despite their best efforts, the evil

deeds of the leaders of Israel have only resulted in the triumph of the gospel, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Jesus knew that his suffering would result in a harvest beyond comparison which made it worthwhile in every way.

May we remain steadfast in the face of evil, knowing that Jesus has gone before us. He is mighty, with all power in heaven and on earth. Just as his suffering was used to bring about God's good purposes, so too will God make use of our suffering in ways we could never imagine.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

Jesus was despised by men so that we could be favored by God.

Have you ever gotten in trouble for something you didn't do?
How did you react in that situation?

How was Jesus treated unfairly in this passage?

How can God use mistreatment for his good purposes?

CHALLENGE

Think of someone who has been mistreated and ask yourself, "How can I help this person experience God's love and forgiveness?"

PRAYER

Jesus, it's easy to be filled with hate and try to payback others who mistreat us. We are sorry. Help us be quick to forgive and show others the love you've shown us. Thank you for being despised by men so I could be favored by God. Amen.

WEDNESDAY

Passover; Predicts Peter's betrayal; Gethsemane

The final evening before his arrest, Jesus was lonely while surrounded by friends. The celebration they were having was monumental—the last true Passover meal of the old covenant. It was not that Passover was an empty ritual that we've abandoned, but that the Passover was designed by God to symbolize the way Jesus would establish the new covenant. As Jesus broke the bread and shared the cup, he knew he would seal the new covenant with his own death just a few hours away. With this last Passover supper, Jesus announced that the new covenant belonged to everyone who ate and drank the bread and wine from Christ's table in faith.

But his disciples did not understand what was coming, nor did they understand their own frailty. Because he loved them, Jesus warned his disciples that they would all be scattered (Matt. 26:31). One of the most important ways we can love those around us is by warning them of the real dangers we see before them. In Luke's gospel, Jesus goes further, giving Peter direct instructions: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32). Despite their apparent faith—despite Peter's protests to the contrary—Jesus knew that they would flee and even deny him after all they had seen. While he spent his final hours seeking to prepare, strengthen, and comfort them, they did not think to console him.

By the time they reached Gethsemane, the disciples showed themselves to be immature boys more than men. Jesus asks them to keep watch with him, saying, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death" (Matt. 26:38). Still, after all they had been through—after all Jesus had warned them of that evening—they could not keep themselves awake even one hour to pray with him. The psalmist gives us a glimpse into what Jesus was thinking: "Reproaches have broken my heart so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none, and for comforters, but I found none" (Psa. 69:20). Yet, even in his frustration, Jesus' words remain gracious: "Watch and pray that you may not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

At times in life, it may be difficult to decide who's a bigger disappointment—ourselves or the people around us. All of us are great at pinpointing the ways others have wronged us (and are often quick to add up all the tallies we have against them). But, for those who have been with Jesus, that awareness of sin turns inward and we become increasingly aware of the many ways we are falling short ourselves. Sin breaks us away from others, but sin has also left our minds and hearts in turmoil. At our worst moments, we might wonder if we can trust anyone, including ourselves. There is comfort to be found in Jesus. By the end of his life, his relationships could be

counted on one of his scarred hands. His friends didn't remain with him, even after he warned them about what was coming. But he was willing to undergo it all for their sake and ours. Although he knew they were going to flee and betray him, Jesus promised he would come to comfort them after he had risen. Although they were unwilling even to keep watch with him on his final night with them, Jesus—the Holy One of Israel—never slumbers or sleeps, and lives forever to intercede for us. We can have great confidence that Jesus, God's suffering servant, will not fail us.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

Jesus was broken so we could be made whole.

Have you ever broken a bone or skinned your knee playing outside? How long did it take to heal? Do you ever feel “broken” when you do something wrong?

What was the special meal that Jesus shared with his disciples (Passover), and what does it point to?

How does Christ being broken for us fix our relationship with God?

CHALLENGE

Who is someone in your life who might be feeling broken? What would it look like to help them feel whole?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, you were “pierced for our transgressions... crushed for our [sin]; the punishment that brought us peace was on [you]... by [your] wounds we are healed.” Thank you for being broken so we could be made whole. Amen.

MAUNDY THURSDAY

Betrayal by Judas: Trial

It's much easier to deal with hatred from an enemy than it is to face hatred in a friend. You don't usually have random enemies, after all. You go back at least long enough to build up bad blood, whether your feud started as kids or just last month. If they hate you, chances are you already know it and aren't going to be too bothered if they show you more proof. But with a friend, it's much different. With true friends, all your defenses come down. You have shared fond times and many meals. You've talked about all the things that are well below the surface of ordinary conversation. Taking an unexpected knife from a friend is a unique betrayal.

On the night that he was arrested, it was Judas Iscariot who delivered Jesus into the hands of his captors. It was one thing for the Pharisees and priests to hate Jesus. Jesus reserved his harshest scorn for them. This was different. The psalmist says: "[I]t is not an enemy who taunts me—then I could bear it; it is not an adversary who deals insolently with me—then I could hide from him" (Psa. 55:12).

Judas wasn't just one among the crowds who listened to Jesus, but one of the twelve. As Judas approached him, Jesus would have known him well: "It is you, a man, my equal, my companion, my familiar friend. We used to take sweet counsel together; within God's house we walked..." (Psa. 55:13-14). When Judas embraced Jesus, as if to greet him "with a holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16), it was like countless other moments over the past three years. It's easy to imagine another possibility—a different history where you could find letters from Judas tucked between Hebrews and James. Instead, Judas became known as "the son of destruction" and the greatest betrayer in history (John 17:12).

It's easy to scoff at Judas and to say that we could never imagine betraying Jesus. In truth, we sound a lot like Peter and his words didn't mean much either (Matt. 26:75). Perhaps we wouldn't have sold Jesus for pocket change, but every time we sin, we exchange the glory of God for something worth far less than silver. We may not be Judas, but Jesus was betrayed and condemned so that our betrayals would be forgiven.

Jesus was God's suffering servant, and he experienced these betrayals so we would become the faithful. His trial was a sham. His condemnation was unjust. His friends handed him over to death or fled for their lives. But Jesus was willing to undergo it all because he loved you—even if you are prone to flee or cower. Jesus came to restore our relationship with God, despite our many betrayals. Even more, he promises to make us "faithful unto death" (Rev. 2:10).

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

Jesus was betrayed in order to make us friends of God.

Which would be more disappointing, being hurt by a friend or someone you don't like? Who would be easier to forgive?

What kind of friend is Jesus?

How does it feel to know that Jesus was willing to suffer for us so we could be friends with God?

CHALLENGE

What are some ways you can be a good friend?

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, you are a friend like no other. You know what it means to be lonely, abandoned, hurt, and betrayed by enemies and even close friends. Thank you for making us right with God. Help us to be faithful friends as we learn to love God and others for your sake. Amen.

GOOD FRIDAY

Crucifixion

I recently saw a clip from a TV show, where an angel and a demon were watching the crucifixion. The demon turned to the angel and asked, “What was it he said that got everyone so upset?” “Be kind to each other,” the angel said, with a look of sweet compassion on his face. “Oh, yeah, that’ll do it,” the demon responded.

I just about put my foot through the screen.

Fortune cookies say things like, “Be kind to each other.” The meanest teacher you ever knew used to say, “Be kind to each other.” No, they didn’t nail Jesus to the Cross because he wouldn’t stop talking about the virtues of being kind. They nailed Jesus to the Cross because they could not hope to match him.

Next to him, their hollow words of pretended faith became obvious lies. When push came to shove, they preferred Barabbas. Barabbas, the murderer, instead of Jesus, who healed their diseases, who cast out their demons, and who spoke with authority as the only Son of the Father. The religious leaders made great efforts to appear holy, with their lengthy prayers for all to hear, and all the new traditions they cooked up to show how much better they were than everyone else. But, compared to the bright glory of Jesus, their best good deeds were filthy.

They nailed Jesus to the Cross because he was God in the flesh and, no matter what they claimed, they hated God, and they loved their sin.

But Jesus was willing to go to the Cross—and he didn’t go only for those who loved him. It would have been easy to go to the Cross for Mary, the mother who bore him and loved him; or Joseph, who raised him as his own, despite not being his father. But, beyond all imagining—the hope beyond all hope—Jesus went to the Cross for us. He went to the Cross, not just because he said we should be kind, but because we have all been so utterly cruel. He went to the Cross, not because we have merely fallen short, but because we have been “haters of God” (Rom. 1:30).

Jesus went to the Cross to show “God’s love for us” because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8).

Have you ever wondered about the penalty that Jesus paid or the weight of the sin on his shoulders? If you’ve lived for any time, you know the weight of a guilty conscience. But on the Cross, Jesus bore the penalty for billions: each and every believer, from Adam until the end of time—however many centuries or millennia we have to go. But his eyes were set firmly upon the prize: “Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,

make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa. 53:11). Because God's love for humanity is so great, even as we have hated him so, Jesus bore our iniquities.

Because Jesus was God's suffering servant, in life and in death, you and I have been made free.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

On the Cross, Jesus' death brought us life.

Have you ever had something bad happen to you, that turned out for good in the end? How did it feel before and after?

Why is the day Jesus died called "Good Friday"?

How does God show his love for us? (Hint: Rom 5:8)

CHALLENGE

Think of someone who might not know Jesus and ask them, "Why is the Friday before Easter called Good Friday?"

Think about your answer from above.

PRAYER

God, thank you for demonstrating your love for us in that while we were still sinners, Jesus died for us. We are sinners who deserve death, but you gave us life instead. Forgive us for trying to be "good enough" to earn salvation. Help us look to Jesus who's done everything we need to have new life in you. May we joyfully invite others into the new life you've given us. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

SATURDAY

High Priestly Prayer

Becoming a parent is like undergoing the most glorious death. The moment those first cries ring out, whoever you were a moment before no longer exists. Mothers recognize this change long before that moment, feeling that life develop within them throughout the process. It is the most natural of all things to have children, and yet it is, perhaps, the miracle of miracles. But when that new life arrives, every parent sees a call to come and die within that child's gaze. From now on, through sleepless nights, laughter, and whatever else might come—it is your life for the sake of theirs.

Despite the popularity of the Dan Brown novels (they are, admittedly, quite fun to read), it is tabloid nonsense to say that Jesus married Mary Magdalene or had children. But Jesus does have a bride—the Church—and the prophet Isaiah said he would have many children. For, although Jesus would be “cut off from the land of the living ... when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:8, 10).

Jesus' final prayers display the kind of fervent passion of a father for his children. In the first section he labors over the apostles, pleading with his Father for their care: “While I was with them, I kept them in your name [and] have guarded them... Keep them from the evil one”(John 17:12, 15).

We're so used to the story, yet so unfamiliar with the culture, that we often miss the danger Jesus' disciples were in. Those debates Jesus had with the Pharisees weren't just fun little arguments between intellectual sparring partners—if Jesus lost those debates, his disciples could have been arrested or even executed (Ex. 35:2, Luke 2:23-28). While he was with them, he could deal with the Pharisees and the particularly difficult exorcisms. But soon, they would face the demons and be brought before the same sham courts without him. But Jesus did not doubt them, despite all they would face, because his victory would supply their every need: “As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sake I consecrate myself, that they also may be sanctified in truth” (John 17:18-19).

As you're reading this today, you should recognize that you are the fruit of the apostles' mission. Just as Jesus was sent from the Father, so too were they sent. We are the greatest great-grandchildren in a long line of spiritual descendants, and Jesus prayed for us too: “I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (John 17:20-21).

Before you were even born, the thought of you drove Jesus to these prayers, and to the Cross, so that you could become part of the Father's family. But it isn't just that you've been adopted; Jesus prays that you would experience the same, perfect union with the Father that Jesus experiences himself. This was the reason Jesus was willing to be the suffering servant, even enter the grave—it was his life for the sake of yours.

And you were worth that cost.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

Because of our sin, we are separated from God; but through Jesus we can belong to God's family.

Have you ever prayed for your friends and family? Share about a time when God answered your prayers.

What are some of the things Jesus prayed for in John 17?

Why do you think this chapter is often called "the High Priestly Prayer?"

CHALLENGE

Think of at least one person to pray for in each of these categories: family, extended family, friends, church, and neighbors. How can you pray for the people on your list?

PRAYER

Jesus, thank you for being a Great High Priest who knows exactly what we need before we even ask. Continue to protect us and make us more like you every day. Just as you prayed, cause our lives to help people see how great God's love is. We love Lord, Amen.

EASTER SUNDAY

Resurrection

Many Christians are possessed by the idea that it is very spiritual to be a doormat for everyone around them. Worse, they think this because they believe it exemplifies how Jesus lived. It's true that Jesus didn't put up a fight. He was the lamb of God and he died "like a lamb that is led to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7). He rebuked his disciples when they raised swords to defend him. Peter was a fisherman. In his whole life to that point, he had probably never once raised a sword in a fight. Jesus was being quite literal when he told his disciples they would die by the sword if they chose to fight.

But it wasn't because Jesus was a pacifist. If anything, Jesus chides them for defending him so weakly, "Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt. 26:53). Jesus didn't need any help to save his life. He could have flattened Jerusalem with a whispered prayer before conquering Rome that evening.

Jesus was peaceful on earth, but not because he refused to fight. It was because he understood that the world's capital wasn't in Italy or Israel, but in Hades. Humanity wasn't only conquered by Rome but by the powers of sin and death. Jesus didn't need help saving his life—saving his life wasn't his goal. Jesus had a battle to win, but it was a battle against the power of death itself. Hebrews says it this way, "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. 2:14).

To the world's eyes, Paul says the message of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. This is one of the reasons why. Why would anyone worship someone like Jesus? Sure, Jesus said some lovely things—even healed some people—but then he got nailed to a beam. Stranger still, Christians wear the executioner's cross on necklaces to constantly be reminded that they worship a guy who got killed. When you put it in these terms, their confusion makes a great deal of sense. All the world sees is the weak, helpless image of Jesus as a slaughtered lamb.

In truth, Jesus was the fiercest warrior the world has ever seen. Every story of fierce knights defeating astronomical odds, and the valiant hero slaying a crimson dragon, are faint echoes of the true Battle. In Christ, God took on human flesh, adopting our every weakness. Despite being the world's maker, he subjected himself to every indignity, while displaying an unearthly love, even for his enemies. Despite having the power to marshal angelic legions, he voluntarily took our beatings, our hatred, and our sin. Despite being the Lord of life, he allowed his life to be ripped away.

Jesus suffered all suffering so that suffering would cease. He died that death might be killed. And, when he rose, he was raised to the place of highest exaltation. Because

Jesus was faithful unto death, God has put “everything in subjection to him, [and] left nothing outside of his control” (Heb. 2:8). Indeed, Jesus has been “crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9). And he has bid us to go in the power of his victory, to make all the nations his disciples.

Jesus is God’s suffering servant, but his suffering has ceased. Now, he lives forever, with all authority in heaven and on earth. And by the power that is at work within us, the very power that defeated death, God will complete the good work he has begun in us.

family DEVOTION

GOSPEL TAKEAWAY

When we were dead in our sins, God made us alive together with Jesus.

What was your very first memory? What was your happiest memory?

How would you have felt going to the tomb where Jesus was buried, only to find an angel telling you, “He is not here, for He has risen, as he said.”

How does the resurrection of Jesus change everything?

CHALLENGE

How does the resurrection change the way we see and treat one another?

PRAYER

Dear God, thank you for the resurrection and new life we have in Jesus. He is not dead, he’s alive! Since we are new creatures in Christ, help us to live in a way that points others to you. Amen.



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