



OKLAHOMA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY

LENT GUIDE 2021



Forward by the President

Whether or not you traditionally observe Lent by fasting in some form or another, it's an essential season in the Christian calendar. During the days leading up to Easter, believers generally take part in self-denial to help us better reflect on Christ's sacrifice on the cross and His ultimate victory over death.

I invite you to join me over the next forty days as we observe the season of Lent. Each weekday, you'll read short entries about one aspect or theme of the Lenten season, arranged to tackle a specific topic each week—Penitence, Fasting, Personal Holiness, Grace, Almsgiving, Death, and Celebration. And during the weekend, we'll provide a few things for you to consider and pray through.

These readings are short and simple—they probably won't take you more than a minute a day. But I encourage you to genuinely take time to think through the implications. Sit with them. Pray through them. Apply them.

I pray this Lenten season will be a time of spiritual growth in your life as we prepare to celebrate Easter. Thank you for becoming more like Jesus with me—this Lenten season and beyond.

Dr. Jim Dunn, President
Oklahoma Wesleyan University



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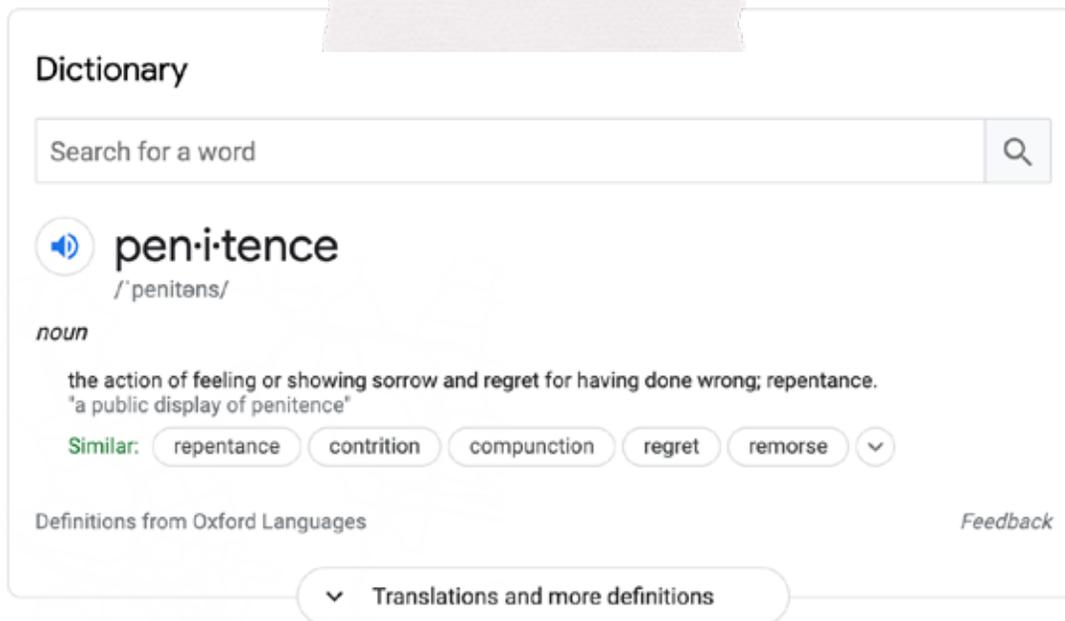
Ash Wednesday



Today is Ash Wednesday, which marks the beginning of the 40 days known as Lent. It's an important day in the Christian calendar, but it may be unfamiliar to many of us. It's a time of repentance, named for the practice of placing ashes on the forehead.

Consider the importance of entering into this Easter season with an attitude of penitence. What better way could there be to prepare to celebrate Christ's resurrection than by humbling ourselves before Him, acknowledging our need for forgiveness and grace?

February 17, 2021



February 18, 2021

Lent is a time of repentance, of seeking God’s grace and mercy for our sins. But today, I want to suggest to you that there’s a right way and a wrong way to be penitent. It’s not just about regret or feeling bad—true penitence is an act of “turning around” or “turning away.” There is action associated with penitence.

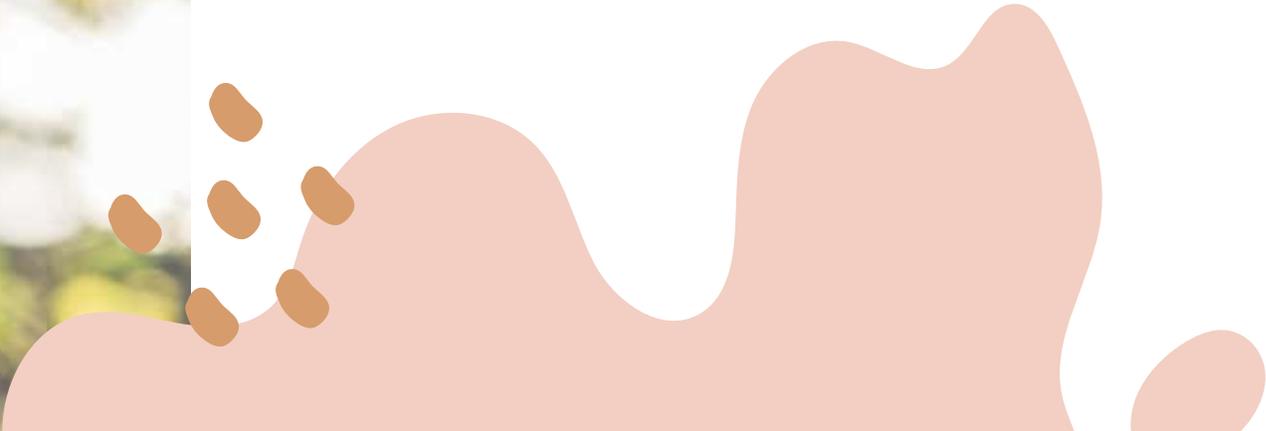
How can you put this into practice today? Use this Lenten season to refocus on Jesus Christ, and view His sacrifice on the cross as a chance for a fresh start.



February 19, 2021

During the crucifixion, Jesus was hung on the cross between two criminals. One of these men, the penitent thief, defends Jesus from the mockery of the crowd, and implores Him to remember him in the coming Kingdom. Jesus assures him that on that very day, he will enter into paradise.

Think about this. If this man could turn to life at the cusp of death, it's never too late! I don't know what trials or struggles you're dealing with today, but I know that nothing is too bad to keep you from God. Give it over to Jesus today. It's never too late!



“Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

Psalm 139:23-24

Prayer for the Weekend

Lord, I often fail you. I have been selfish and prideful, weighed down by the sins of both omission and commission. Today, I fall on my knees in repentance before You. Give me fresh eyes to see Your grace, and give me Your Holy Spirit as I pursue holiness in my life.

Fasting

February 22, 2021

The season of Lent has often been reduced to the act of giving up some kind of bad habit. You'll hear friends talk about giving up sweets, or soda, or maybe social media—small shifts in daily habits, but not great life sacrifices.

In reality, Lent is meant to be a focused, forty-day period of preparation for Easter. We fast to refresh ourselves, to shift our gaze to the sacrifice Christ made for us on the cross of Calvary.

Take a moment in prayer today to truly consider Christ's sacrificial death for you, which bridged the gap to life for all of us.

February 23, 2021

Fasting during Lent is a practical way to follow Jesus' command to "Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me." (Matthew 16:24) But there are wrong reasons to sacrifice. It shouldn't be done because it gives us something to talk about, or because everybody else is doing it. We shouldn't do it because we think it makes us holy, either, not in or of itself.

We fast to deny ourselves of something that consumes us, so that we can become more consumed by Jesus. Think today about why you're sacrificing, not what you're sacrificing. And do it for Christ alone.



February 24, 2021

By fasting during Lent, we are reminded of a simple concept that is, at the same time, endlessly difficult to put into practice: In Christ, we will never need. *Anything*. By denying ourselves of food or a habit, we affirm our dependency on Christ. It's a challenge to reorganize and reorient our lives around the Savior who provides everything we will ever need.

As we wait for Christ's resurrection, take some time today to consider what you're relying on in your life. Then, give it to God.

February 25, 2021

As I've written already this week, the fasting we do during Lent serves to help us prepare our hearts to remember the sacrifice that Christ made on the cross of Calvary. It allows us to fully celebrate the joy of the resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Lent also serves as a useful reminder of the preparation we should be doing in anticipation of Christ's return. The mission isn't over! We have the privilege and responsibility to make disciples of all nations. How can you spread the message of Christ with someone in your circle this week?



February 26, 2021

We usually talk about sacrificing things for God during Lent, but this year, I've been thinking a lot about abandoning things over to Him. What if we focused on the things we need to totally abandon to pursue God in a healthier, more holistic way? It could be a sin struggle, or maybe a bad direction, or even just a dream that's yours and not necessarily from the Lord.

Lent is indeed a season of preparation and sacrifice. Is there anything you need to sacrifice or abandon to God today?

“‘Even now,’ declares the Lord, ‘return to Me with all your heart, fasting and weeping and mourning.’ Rend your heart and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love, and He relents from sending calamity.”

Joel 2:12-13

Prayer for the Weekend

Lord, guide me in Your goodness this week. No matter what temporary matters I give up or don't give up in fasting, let me experience Your abundant goodness in new and exciting ways as I lay all of myself at Your feet. Help me to live my life as if I truly believe that You provide me everything I will ever need.

Personal Holiness

March 1, 2021

To focus on self-sacrifice and penitence during the Lenten season is also to emphasize personal holiness in our lives. We fast to remember Christ's sacrifice, yes, and to prepare our hearts to celebrate Easter. But we also take the time to seek righteousness in our lives before God Almighty.

This week, we'll focus on being holy as Christ is holy. Let it be a time of honest self-reflection, of truly taking stock of where you are in your spiritual journey, even if you don't necessarily like the answers. Today, pray and ask God to reveal how you can pursue holiness in your life.



March 2, 2021

This morning, let me ask you a question—what are you known for? Is it your intellect? Wealth? Power? Your accomplishments? Authentic followers of Christ are to be known by their love for others. 1 John 4:8 says that “Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.”

So, how are you loving? Start at home, at work, in your everyday life. Someone around you, right now, needs the love of Christ, and they need it from you. Be known for something eternal today, and love as Jesus loved.

March 3, 2021

In the time of the Roman Empire, the cross was not a noble way to die. In fact, it was meant to be as shameful as possible. And that's how Christ died. Imagine this for a moment. Jesus, the Son of God, who will someday rule over the new heaven and the new earth, lowered Himself to die like a common criminal. And yet how often are we weighed down by pride, by vanity, or by obsession with status?

Take time today to remember a simple, offensive truth: it's not about us! As Jesus submitted to the will of the Father, so must we, each and every day.



point people
to christ

March 4, 2021

I can think of many acts of mundane, everyday generosity in the Easter story. Think, for example, of the ministry of the women who went to the tomb to prepare Jesus' body for burial. They no doubt had busy schedules. The oils and perfumes they prepared to use were quite costly, and I don't think they had a church expense account they could draw from. They gave of their own time, their own resources, their own hearts.

Lent is a time to give to others. This very day is a great time to meet a need for someone in your life. Be generous and point people to Christ, who gave us the ultimate gift.



March 5, 2021

Are you personally associated with the cross of Jesus Christ and with what it represents?

Jesus tells us that if we are going to be His true disciples, we must deny ourselves and take up our crosses. Make no mistake: it's costly. We may even be asked to give up our lives for our commitment to Jesus and His ways.

Are you truly a person of the cross? It means self-denial. It means death to selfish ambition, pride, and having our own way. Pray this prayer with me today: "Lord, let me be a person of the cross, no matter what happens!"

“Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.”

2 Corinthians 7:1

Prayer for the Weekend

God, I desire You. I desire to be holy, as You are holy. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and give me the strength to follow You in every aspect of my life.



grace

March 8, 2021

Through the self-denial we experience by fasting during Lent, Christians take special care to prepare their hearts for the Easter celebration. This week, I want us to focus on the Grace of God, given to us freely through Christ's death on the cross to redeem us.

God's grace is a gift to us, and we must all respond to it in some way. Either we accept it and give our lives to following Christ, or we reject it forever. It's the most important decision you'll ever make. Take time today to give God thanks for His undeserved, unmerited grace to us.



March 9, 2021

I often find that, rather than responding to Christ's gift of grace, people try to challenge it, to poke holes in it. "Prove to me Christ rose from the dead," they say. "Prove to me it matters."

Let me tell you: if you need hope today, the resurrection of Jesus Christ matters. If you need a new direction today, the resurrection of Christ matters. If you need healing in your life today, it matters. The resurrection is just as important today as it was that first Easter Sunday. Place your hope in the living Christ today!



March 10, 2021

Today, I want to submit an idea to you: God's grace is not a passive enterprise. It's not something that we receive once and then move on from, or something we receive every few weeks during communion at our church.

God invites us to be active participants in grace by allowing us to offer it freely to those around us in our lives. The question is: are we doing this? There's someone close to you right now who needs to see the grace of God in their life. Pray today that the Lord would show you how to make a difference for them.

March 11, 2021

When Christ rose from the grave on Easter Sunday, He provided an opportunity for brand new life. A new beginning. He defeated death! No longer are we slaves to the grave—we are servants of the living God, who will rule forever from on high.

That's what grace can do in our lives. It creates new beginnings. No matter what you're going through, Christ can redeem it. Rejoice in God with me as He makes all things new. Pray that He will make you willing and obedient as He sculpts you into His Image.



Amazing Grace

John Newton, 1779 (1725-1807)

1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound, That
 2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear, And
 3. The Lord has prom - ised good to me, His
 4. Through man - y dan - gers, toils, and snares, I
 5. When we've been there ten thou - sand years, Bright

saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but
 grace my fears re - lieved; How pre - cious did that
 word my hope se - cures; He will my shield and
 have al - read - y come; 'Tis grace hath brought me
 shin - ing as the sun, We've no less days to

now am found, Was blind, but now I see.
 grace ap - pear The hour I first be - lieved!
 por - tion be As long as life en - dures.
 safe thus far, And grace will lead me home.
 sing God's praise Than when we'd first be - gun.

Ephesians 1:7

"In Him we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace."



March 12, 2021

I have a question for you today: what does it mean to truly rejoice? It's simple, really. True joy only comes from having a personal relationship with the One who died and rose for each of us. It means reflecting on what God has done, embracing the grace He has given us, and choosing to live in the comfort of God's joy even when the circumstances of life become difficult. Through good times and bad, God provides joy.

Let's practice rejoicing together today in the resurrection of our Savior, who conquered death once and for all. Praise the Lord!

Prayer for the Weekend

Lord, I am humbled by the undeserved grace You have offered to me. Thank You for Your free gift of love and the forgiveness of sin. I pray You'll give me the strength to offer grace, letting Your light shine through me to those in my life who desperately need You.



The image shows a screenshot of a dictionary entry for the word "alms-giving". At the top, there is a search bar with the text "Search for a word" and a magnifying glass icon. Below the search bar, the word "alms-giving" is displayed in a large, bold font, with a speaker icon to its left. Underneath the word is its phonetic transcription: "/ä(l)mz'giviNG/". The word is identified as a "noun". The definition provided is: "(in historical or religious contexts) the practice of giving money or food to poor people. 'benevolence in the form of almsgiving was encouraged'". At the bottom of the entry, it says "Definitions from Oxford Languages" and "Feedback". A dropdown menu is visible at the bottom of the entry, showing "Translations and more definitions".

Dictionary

Search for a word

 **alms-giv-ing**
/ä(l)mz'giviNG/
noun

(in historical or religious contexts) the practice of giving money or food to poor people.
"benevolence in the form of almsgiving was encouraged"

Definitions from Oxford Languages Feedback

Translations and more definitions

March 15, 2021

I once heard a local priest encouraging his congregation to “give alms” during the Lenten season. What he meant by that was showing simple kindness to the least and lost among us, the people in our lives who need it most.

We often don’t keep our eyes open to these needy among us. We want to witness Jesus Christ’s resurrection personally, but on our joyful and triumphant march to the tomb, we fail to see the poor among us. Remember, Lent is about more than giving up chocolate. How can you give alms to those around you today?



March 16, 2021

The Easter story is marked by extravagant generosity. God gave us a magnificent gift through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who came to die and rise again, providing a way for us to spend eternity with Him. What an uncommonly precious, life-changing present!

I pray that we will mark this Lenten season with our own acts of generosity, in all aspects of life. I pray we are generous in our community and to our families. I pray we are generous in our churches, and in our praise and worship to the Almighty. Ask yourself this: how can you show extravagant generosity today?



March 17, 2021

During the season of Lent, we're called to give generously to the least and lost among our communities. But let me ask you a question: is this generosity expensive?

You better believe it is. Take Jesus Christ Himself. The extravagant generosity He displayed for us on the cross cost Him His very life, and many of His disciples also gave their very lives. While our own acts of generosity may not cost us that much, they're still expensive. They take time, money, energy, effort. They can cost us standing or status. But these gifts are the proper response to the One who gave His all for us. Who can you show generosity to today?

March 18, 2021

When many of us think about generosity towards our local churches or local pastors, we only consider money. We give our tithes and offerings when the plate comes around each week, and we think we're done. But today, I want to encourage you to think beyond that. How can you be truly generous to your church this week?

Are there ways you can volunteer to meet a need? Are there gifts you're not investing back in the church body? Maybe you can be generous with your praise and worship, going above and beyond in your expression of love. Consider how you can be truly generous to your church this week.

March 19, 2021

Lent's focus on sacrifice and self-denial is a challenge to our perspective, helping us shift focus to Christ. In the same way, focusing on generosity during Lent helps us shift our mindset away from ourselves and toward helping others.

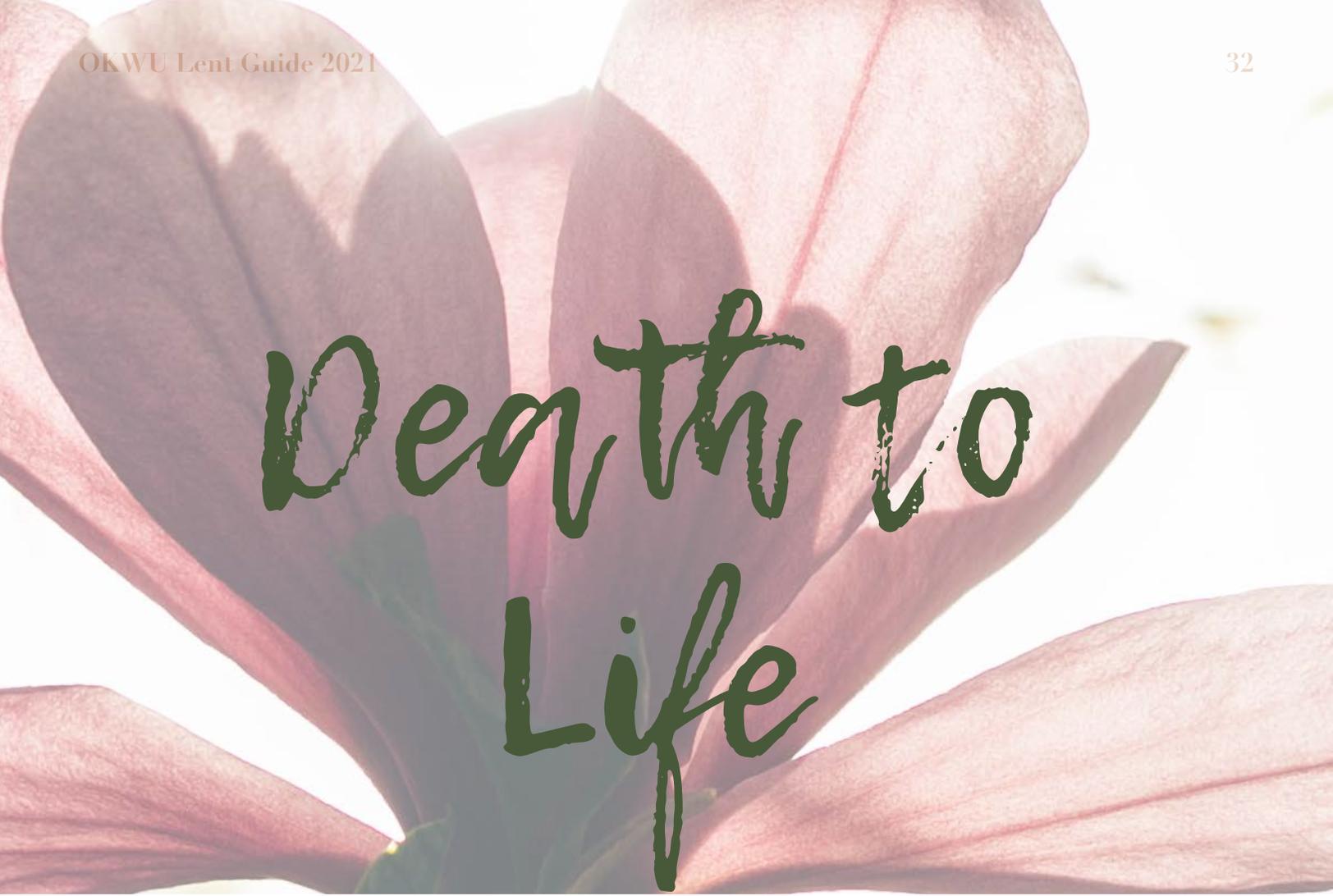
Think about it. When you're focused on how you can give back, your whole state of mind changes, from me-first to others-first. It makes us healthier, happier, and holier. Test me on this: pray to the Lord to give you someone today you can practice extravagant generosity towards, and see how your mindset changes. I bet you'll be surprised.

“Remember this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Prayer for the Weekend

Lord, as You have given to me, so I desire to give of myself to You and others. Put people in my life with needs to meet, and give me eyes to see, the ears to hear, and the courage to tangibly show them Your grace.



Death to Life

March 22, 2021

Every winter, nature experiences a season of death. Trees lose their leaves, the grass dies, and the flowers fade. But during spring we see, before our very eyes, how life can emerge from death. Think about it. Flowers come out of the ground, the sun shines longer and warmer, and people begin to get out of their homes, experiencing their own miniature resurrection.

But the most significant resurrection we celebrate each Spring is always Christ's. His exit from the grave on Easter Sunday proved God's victory, once and for all, over death, changing the course of history. Rejoice with me today that the Lord who defeated death calls us His own children. What a gift!

March 23, 2021

If flowers didn't come back to life each year in the Spring, wouldn't we pity them? And if nature couldn't rush back into life each Spring, blooming and covering our world with green, wouldn't we fiercely mourn the passing of winter?

The Apostle Paul reminds believers that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead, we are to be pitied more than anyone in history. And he's right. But Jesus HAS risen, and He's still resurrecting lives today. What needs to be raised back to life for you today? Give it to Jesus, the One who makes all things new.



He makes all
things new



March 24, 2021

The Easter season celebrates Christ's resurrection from the grave, and it also symbolizes something that all of us crave: new beginnings. Think about the spring season Easter falls in. Nature itself bursts forth from the death of winter, seeming to proclaim alongside us Christ's victory over death.

We can have a new beginning, too. When we put our trust in the Lord, we were given new life. No longer are we defined by sin or guilt or shame, but by God's abundant grace. Join me today in praising the God of second chances as He makes all things new.

March 25, 2021

Did you know that the word Lent is a shortened form of an Old English word that means “Spring Season?” This idea, of nature coming back to life, is a pivotal part of Lent’s celebration and observation. Sometimes, I think that what makes spring so meaningful is the death that precedes it during winter. The balance of the seasons is necessary, and it provides unique significance to spring.

In the same way, the solemn remembrance and sorrow of Christ’s death on the cross is essential to the joy that comes Easter morning. Praise God for the balance of His creation.



March 26, 2021

There is sometimes great sorrow within the pages of Scripture, and when Jesus died on the cross, it was a time of deep sadness and grief for His followers.

Many of us are dealing with sorrow in our own lives: sickness, depression, loneliness, grief. But Christ understands our sorrows, and we can cry to Him at all times. And guess what? Just like the grief of Good Friday turned to joy on Easter Sunday, so it can be in our lives. What grief can you place at the foot of the cross today?

“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in Me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.’”

John 11:25-26

Prayer for the Weekend

Lord, I thank You and praise You for the sacrifice You made on the cross. There is no other response than to fall on my knees in repentance, worship, and gratitude. Give me fresh eyes to experience this Easter celebration, that I might experience new joy in Your atonement and in Your resurrection.



Palm Sunday



Feast

Palm Sunday is a Christian moveable feast that falls on the Sunday before Easter. The feast commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, an event mentioned in each of the four canonical Gospels. [Wikipedia](#)

Date: Sunday, March 28, 2021

Significance: commemorates Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem; first day in Holy Week

Observed by: [Christians](#)

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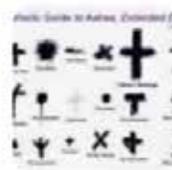
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CELEBRATION

March 29, 2021

Yesterday was Palm Sunday, one of my favorite days in the Christian calendar. I love to imagine the joy and excitement on display as the God of the universe entered into Jerusalem as a triumphant king.

I think many of us view Jesus more as the sacrificial lamb of Good Friday than we do as the triumphant King over all creation. But He is both! As we think on Palm Sunday today, I encourage you to consider Christ the Mighty King, who conquered death and is coming again to set creation right. Take time to worship Him today!

March 30, 2021

It's likely that many of the same people worshipping Jesus on Palm Sunday were in the crowd at Pilate's palace later that week, calling for Jesus to die and for Barabbas to be set free. Isn't this incredible to think about? How quickly our human hearts can change!

They didn't understand Jesus' real mission. They wanted Him to be a messiah of the moment, rather than the Savior of the World. We can often fall into this same trap in our own lives, trying to fit Jesus into our plans, rather than trying to match our plans to Him. Take some time today to ask for forgiveness from the Lord for misunderstanding His real mission, and give your plans to Him.

March 31, 2021

When Jesus was hanging on that cross, we read that many in the crowd below Him mocked Him. They challenged Him to save Himself and come down. It just didn't make sense to them that the Messiah wouldn't immediately rescue Himself from death.

Understand this: it's not that He lacked power—Christ was doing a more extraordinary work, saving all of humanity instead of just Himself. Take time today to worship a Savior who is powerful and unbound, but at the same time meek, submitting to the cross to fulfill the will of the Father.



April 1, 2021

Jesus was killed by the consent of the crowd. In only one week, people shifted from worshipping Him to calling for His death, mocking Him at the foot of the cross. And today, it can feel like that crowd is still there, mocking Jesus. Many of the things the Church believes in have become unpopular. We can be viewed as intolerant, backward, or out of touch.

Jesus predicted this. He said that if the world hates us, they hated Him first. (John 15:18). I pray that you will find strength in Christ this Easter season, striving not for the approval of mankind, but of the unchanging God eternal.

Good Friday

On the cross, there was a sign posted above Christ's head: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews." That sign, that proclamation, was present over Him as He died for the sins of the world.

I think about that a lot. Even in the darkest hour of mankind's history, on that shameful cross, there was a testament to Christ's Lordship. And when He rose from the grave three days later, His victory over death was complete. Jesus was King then, and He's King now. My prayer on this Good Friday is that you allow Him to be King and Lord over your life.

April 2, 2021

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him. For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, He cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over Him.”

Romans 6:8-11

Prayer for the Easter Weekend

Lord, I praise You. I am in awe of Your plan for creation, demonstrated through the events of Passion Week and Easter Sunday. Give me a heart to worship You with joy this weekend and always, as we remember Your glorious victory over death.



The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

John 1:14