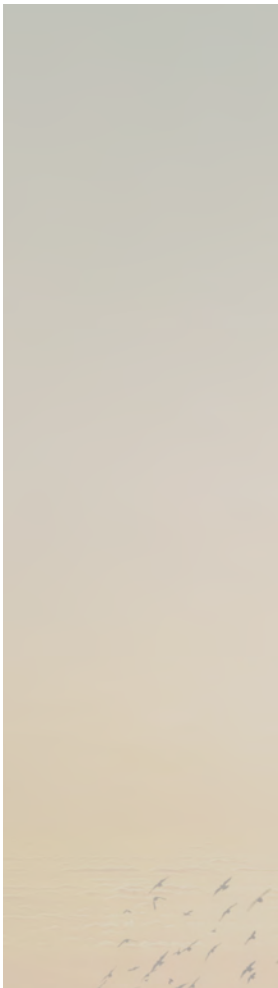
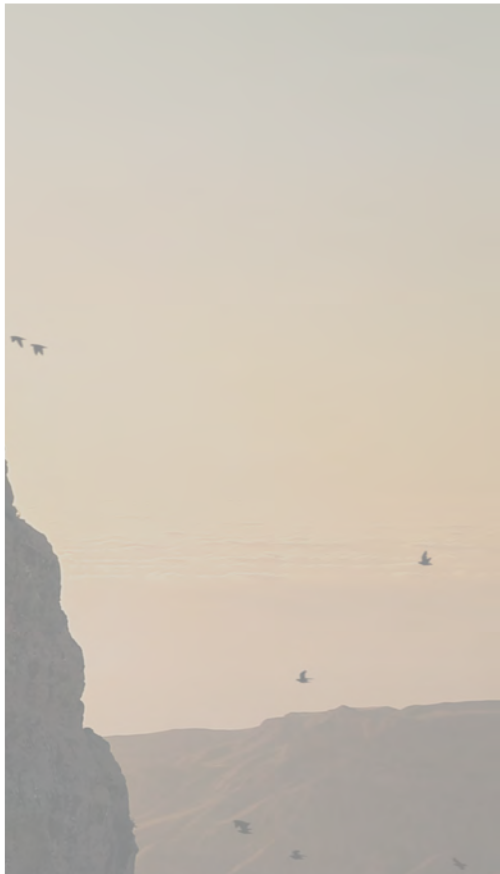




# LAST WORDS.

A SEVEN WEEK JOURNEY THROUGH LENT

GRACE IN THE WORD



**NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**WHAT IS YOUR HOPE FOR THIS STUDY IN GOD'S WORD?**

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# Last Words of Jesus

## ABOUT THIS READING PLAN

This reading plan walks you through the last words of Jesus on the cross. This plan will take an in-depth look at each of the seven statements that Jesus made from the cross and dig into the spiritual and practical significance of each of these statements.

### Each day's reading includes:

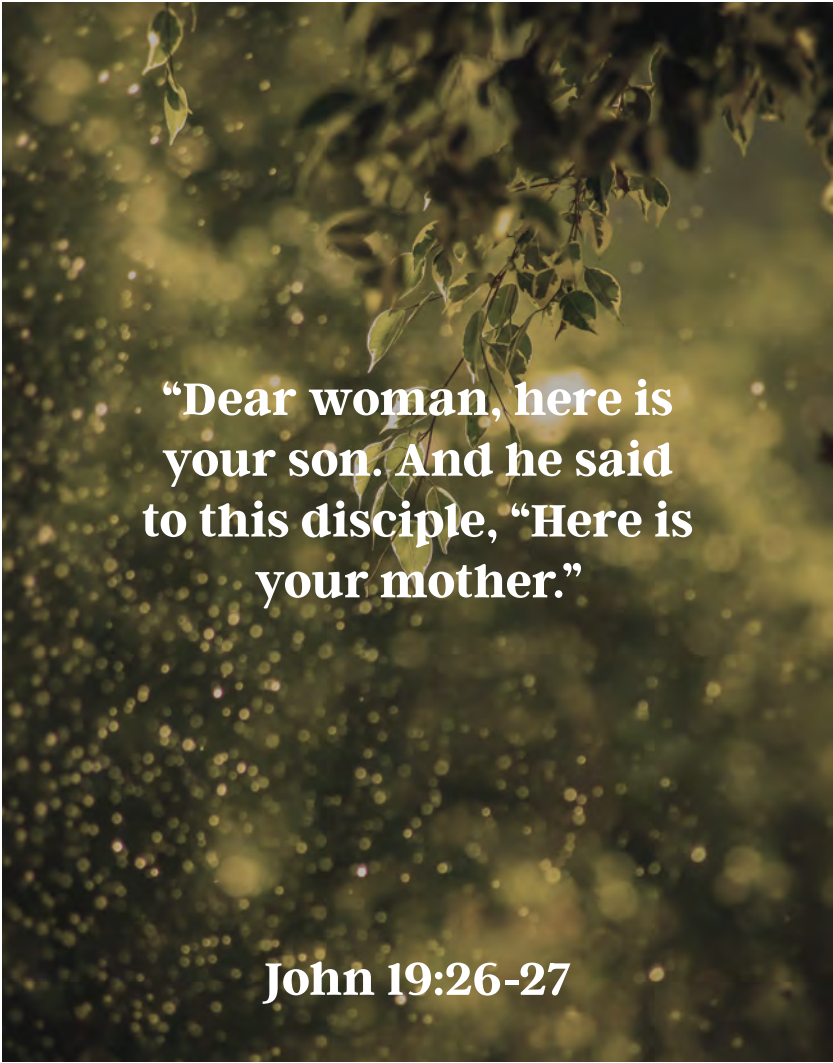
- The statement from Jesus on the cross and other related scripture references throughout the Bible.
- A commentary, devotional, or reflection thought to process the message more intentionally.
- Space for you to write thoughts or questions from that day's corresponding scripture or reflection.

Check out [graceclarksville.com/graceintheword](http://graceclarksville.com/graceintheword) for more resources, and join our Facebook community at [facebook.com/groups/graceintheword](https://facebook.com/groups/graceintheword)

Study material in this guide was adapted from *ESV Study Bible*, *NIV Application Commentary*, *The Encyclopedia of the Bible*, N.T. Wright's *Matthew For Everyone Part 2*, *The Seven Last Words from the Cross* by Fleming Rutledge, *Cross-Shattered Christ* by Stanley Hauerwas, *IVP New Testament Commentary*, *Matthew Henry Commentary*, *The Book of Common Prayer*, *DesiringGod.org*, and *Enduring Word Commentary* by David Guzik.

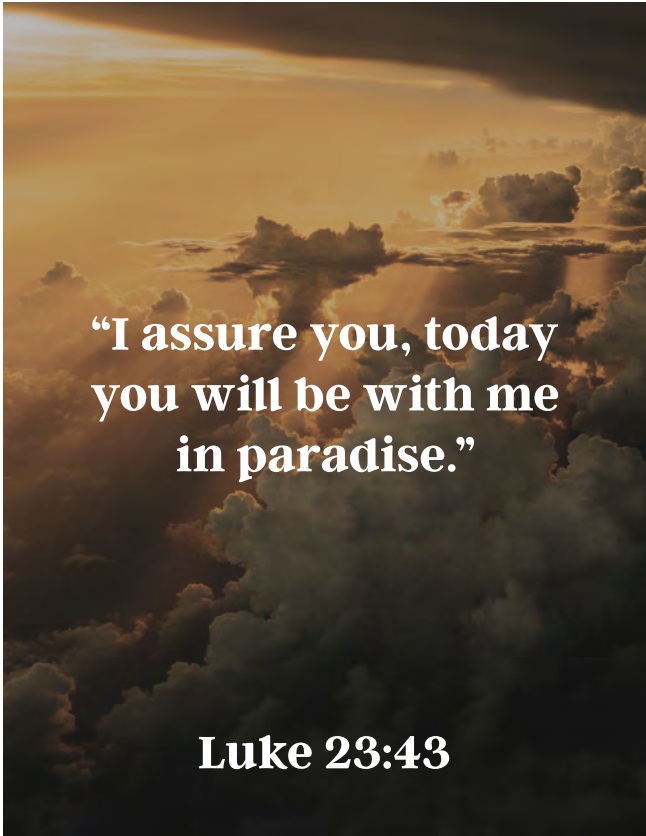
## WHY STUDY THE SEVEN LAST WORDS OF JESUS

Studying Jesus's words in Scripture is always useful as it helps us to know more about Him and His character. Studying Jesus' last words on the cross specifically tell us so much about Jesus as fully God and fully man. The seven statements together reveal the great strength and compassion of His character, and help us understand that Jesus went through both spiritual and physical distress during His time on the cross. There is so much to reflect on in Jesus' last words, but we don't want to simply focus on what these words mean for us and our lives. We hope in our time studying these last words, we can also face the reality of what it means that God sacrificed His only Son for us. Spending time reflecting on these last words will reveal to us how beautiful God's redemption story is, and the power that is made available to us through the death and resurrection of our Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus' last words on the cross, over two thousand years ago, offer hope for us today. They point us to the forgiveness, hope, comfort, and compassion of Christ's words in his final moments on earth.



**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

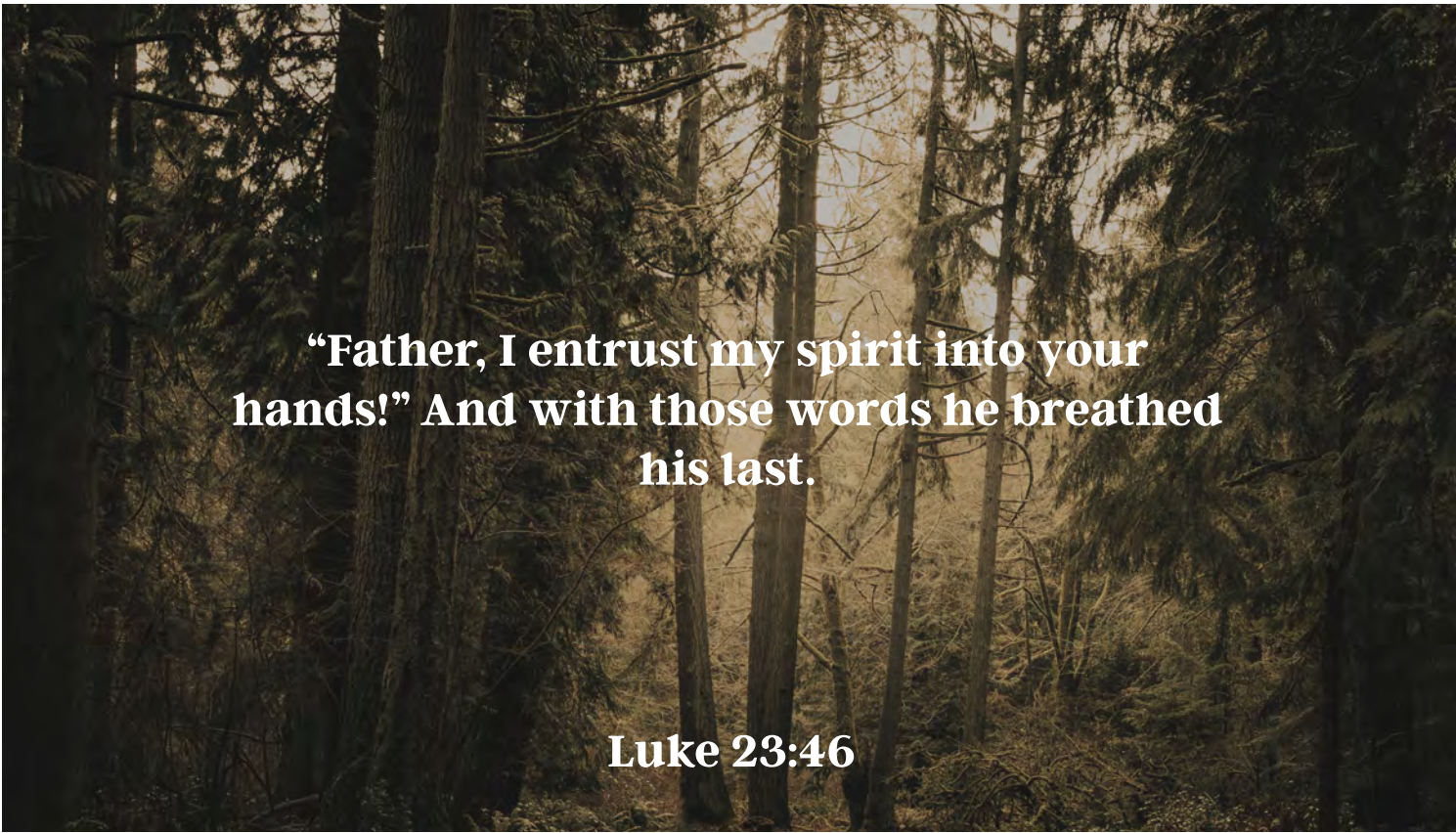
**John 19:26-27**



**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

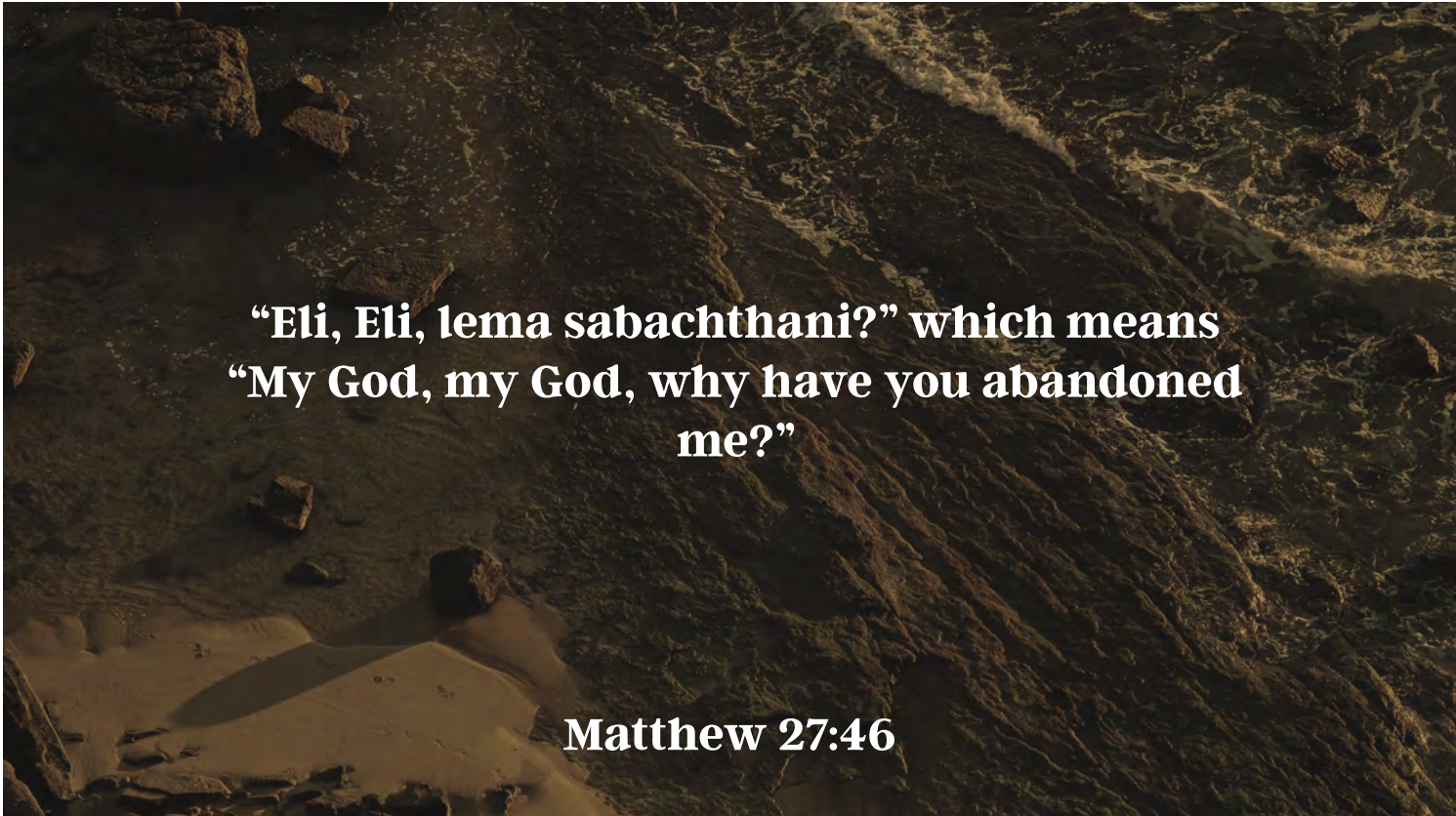
**Luke 23:43**

**LAST**



**“Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!” And with those words he breathed his last.**


**Luke 23:46**



**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” which means  
“My God, my God, why have you abandoned  
me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

# WORDS.



**“Father, forgive  
them, for they don’t  
know what they are  
doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**



**“It is finished!”**

**John 19:30**



**“I am thirsty.”**

**John 19:28**

# What is Lent?

Traditionally believers use the season of Lent, which is the 40 days leading up to Resurrection (Easter) Sunday, as a time to remember the life, death and resurrection of our Savior. This is often done through a variety of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, reflecting on Scripture and fasting. Many Christians also use this time for introspection, repentance, and personal growth. The Lenten season serves as a time for believers to renew their faith and draw closer to the core tenets of Christianity.

It has become common for believers to think of Lent as a time to give something up in order to focus on our need for Jesus. This is a small act of self-denial and sacrifice that we can make in our lives as we reflect on the ultimate sacrifice Jesus made for us. If you choose to make that a part of your Lent season, think about choosing something in your life that would truly feel like a sacrifice and something that takes your focus away from the Lord or time with the Lord. Fasting, or abstaining, for certain activities and items in our days can point us in this season to focus more deeply on the life and sacrifice of Jesus. Throughout church history and across various Christian traditions, the Lent season is a time for sober reflection on our shortcomings, our need for salvation, but also a time to consider how merciful, loving, and forgiving our God is. It is a time to reflect on God's beautiful redemption story that culminates in the resurrection of His Son Jesus.

We are called to a life of self-control, that is why the practice of fasting is so important. Fasting historically is choosing to abstain from something good so you can enjoy something even better. It is mentioned all throughout scripture as a practice that people use to draw closer to the Lord. So what might that look like for you to practice self-control in a specific area for the 40 days between Ash Wednesday and Good Friday?

Be prayerful and ask God to show you what is a stronghold for you. Maybe you fast a certain meal each day, maybe a specific food or drink, social media, the news, TV, a certain type of music, book, or movie, or maybe it's unnecessary spending. Ask Him to guide you in this area. Choosing to observe Lent is counter-cultural. It goes against every voice out there telling us what we need, what we should watch, wear, eat, drink, and buy, but instead points us to the voice of the Lord telling us what we really need deep in our souls. It requires us to go against the flow.

G.K. Chesterton says,

*"a dead thing can go with the stream, but only a living thing can go against it."*

We hope spending the next 40 days in God's Word as a church family will be helpful in meditating on God's redemptive work and the significance of Jesus' death and resurrection. To that end, we think the seven words of Jesus from the cross are a perfect lens to center our hearts on what Jesus came to do and who He was as an example for us to follow with our lives. These words provide an excellent roadmap for our hearts and minds as we walk through the weeks leading up to Holy Week and Resurrection Sunday.

# Prayer and Reflection

## **BEFORE YOU READ GOD'S WORD TODAY, SEEK HIS HELP WITH THESE 5 PRAYERS**

1. God, give me wisdom, knowledge, and understanding.
2. God, let any knowledge I gain help me love You and others more and not puff me up.
3. God, help me see something new about You I've never seen before.
4. God, correct any lies I believe about You or anything I misunderstand.
5. God, direct my steps according to Your Word.

**\*\* Prayers from *The Bible Recap Reading Plan* by Tara-Leigh Cobble \*\***

## **TIPS FOR APPROACHING SCRIPTURE**

- Pray before you read (use the prayers above)
- Read the words in proper context, taking into consideration when it was written, to whom it was written, and what was happening when it was written (a good study bible is helpful, we recommend the ESV Study Bible)
- Look for God's character and faithfulness to His people
- Look for themes that point to Jesus
- Look for anything repetitive, unusual, confusing, hopeful, comforting, challenging
- Once you are finished reading, take a few minutes to meditate on what you have read:
  - | Narrow down what you've read to just one or two main thoughts.
  - | What did I learn about God in these passages?
  - | How can I praise God for what this says about him?
  - | What did I learn about the human heart in these passages?
  - | What behavior/emotions come when I forget these things about God?
  - | What is God revealing to me today that I need to listen to?
  - | What sins do I need to confess in light of what God revealed today?
  - | What next step can I take in light of what I have read today?

# Weekly Checklist

## WEEK ONE - FATHER, FORGIVE THEM

- **Day 1-** Luke 23:32-34, Micah 7:18-20, Nehemiah 9, Psalm 86:5-17, Matthew 9:1-8, 1 John 4:8-10
- **Day 2-** Luke 10:23-24; 23:34, Micah 4:12, Acts 3:13-26; 13:26-28; 17:24-30, 1 Corinthians 2:7-16, Ephesians 4:17-24
- **Day 3-** Isaiah 53:11-12, Luke 22:31-32, Hebrews 5:7; 7:25, 1 Timothy 2:5, John 17:9-26, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16, Romans 8:34-39, 1 John 2:1-2
- **Day 4-** Luke 15:11-32, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Peter 1:13-22; 2:21-25, Acts 7:54-60
- **Day 5-** Matthew 5:7-12; 5:43-48; 20:26-28, Luke 6:27-36, John 18:36-37, Philippians 2:3-8
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Rest Day

## WEEK TWO - YOU WILL BE WITH ME IN PARADISE

- **Day 1-** Luke 23:26-43, Romans 10:9-13, Titus 3:4-7
- **Day 2-** Matthew 11:28-30, Acts 4:11-12, John 14:6, Romans 8:38-39
- **Day 3-** Luke 23:26-43, Revelation 21:1-7, 2 Corinthians 12:1-4
- **Day 4-** Luke 23:39-43, Psalm 77:11-15
- **Day 5-** Luke 23:39-43, Isaiah 40:28-31, Psalm 27:13-14
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Rest Day

## WEEK THREE: BEHOLD YOUR SON / BEHOLD YOUR MOTHER

- **Day 1-** John 19:25-27; 7:1-9, Matthew 13:55-58, Luke 2:25-35, Isaiah 40:10-11
- **Day 2-** Mark 3:31-35, Acts 1:12-14, Romans 8:16-25, Galatians 3:26-29, Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 2:11-18
- **Day 3-** Romans 3:21-31; 5:20-21, Ephesians 2:1-10, Colossians 1:6-29; 3:10-17
- **Day 4-** Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15-30; 16:5-15, Acts 1:6-11; 2:22-41, 1 Corinthians 12:12-27
- **Day 5-** Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12:9-18, Ephesians 4:1-4, Philippians 2:1-11, 1 John 4:7-12, John 13:34-35
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Rest Day



## WEEK FOUR: WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?

- **Day 1-** Matthew 27:46, John 1:1-4, Romans 6:16-18
- **Day 2-** Matthew 27:46, Psalm 22:1-8, Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:38-39, Matthew 28:19-20
- **Day 3-** Matthew 27:46, Psalm 139
- **Day 4-** Hebrews 13:5-6, John 14:15-18, John 16:33
- **Day 5-** Matthew 27:45-49, Matthew 17:10-13
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Rest Day

## WEEK FIVE: I THIRST

- **Day 1-** John 19:28-29, John 1:9-14; 11:33-35, Matthew 4:1-11, Hebrews 4:15-16
- **Day 2-** Psalm 22:14-15; 69:21, Isaiah 53:10-12, John 10:14-18
- **Day 3-** Exodus 17:1-7, Judges 15:18-20, Psalm 29:3, John 4:7-26; 7:37-38, Revelation 7:14-17
- **Day 4-** John 19:28-30, John 1:29, 36, Exodus 12:22-23, Psalm 51:2-12, Hebrews 9:19-22; 10:19-23
- **Day 5-** Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 7:15-28; 10:8-12, Luke 1:31-33, Revelation 19:11-16; 21:5-6
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Rest Day

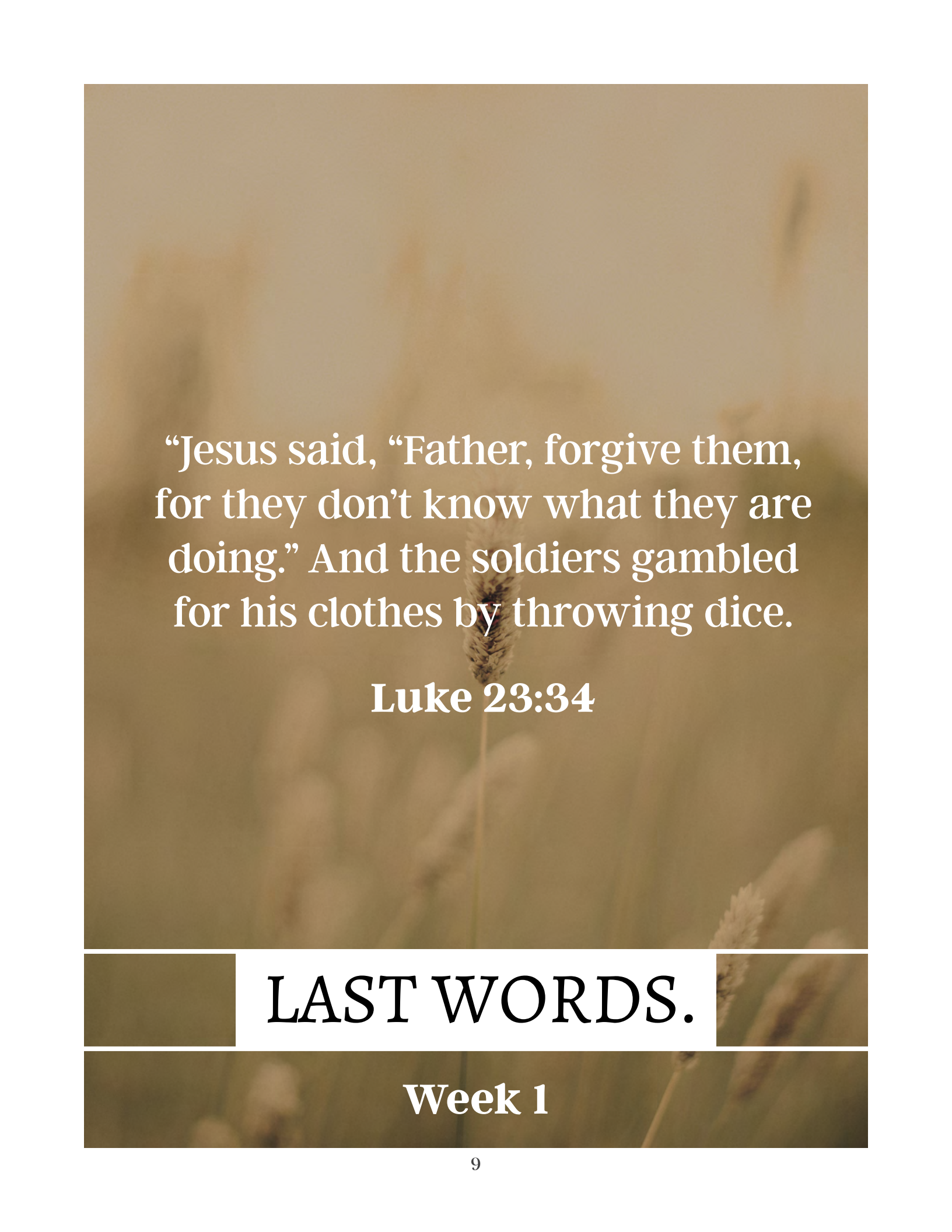
## WEEK SIX: IT IS FINISHED

- **Day 1-** John 19:30, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57
- **Day 2-** John 19:30, John 1:1-5, Genesis 1:31-2:2
- **Day 3-** John 19:30, Colossians 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27, Hebrew 12:1-14
- **Day 4-** John 19:30, John 1:29-36, Hebrews 10:1-4
- **Day 5-** Luke 23:34, Luke 23:43, John 19:26, Matthew 27:46, John 19:28, John 19:30
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day
- **Day 7-** Palm Sunday- Luke 19:28-40

## WEEK SEVEN: INTO YOUR HANDS

- **Day 1-** Monday - Luke 23:44-46
- **Day 2-** Tuesday - Luke 23:46, Luke 2:41-49, Ephesians 4:6, Isaiah 64:8, Matthew 26:36-56
- **Day 3-** Wednesday - Luke 23:46, Genesis 2:7, Romans 12:2, Romans 14:8, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 26:57-68 and 27:11-26
- **Day 4-** Maundy Thursday - Luke 23:46, Matthew 26:26-29, 26:36-39, Colossians 2:13-15, John 5:30; 8:28-29
- **Day 5-** Good Friday - Choose one gospel account or read them all: Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19
- **Day 6-** Reflection Day - His Burial - Matthew 27:50-61, Luke 23:44-56
- **Day 7-** Easter Sunday - Luke 24





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

**Luke 23:34**

**LAST WORDS.**

**Week 1**

Week 1, Day 1

# Monday

Luke 23:32-34, Micah 7:18-20, Nehemiah 9, Psalm 86:5-17,  
Matthew 9:1-8, 1 John 4:8-10

**“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**

## **FATHER, FORGIVE THEM - A PARDON FOR THOSE WHO COME TO HIM**

At the very least, this first statement of Jesus on the cross reminds us of God’s forgiveness of our sins. Our sin often comes from a rebellion against God; whether we are knowingly or unknowingly rebelling, it stems from a place of pride that we know better than God. It’s a problem as old as time, beginning at the fall in Genesis and winding its way through history, and now to us in our rebellions. But “God is love”; therefore, He can’t be anything but love. He does not abandon His people. God knew that the sacrifices of the old law would be insufficient, so He sent His only Son to be the ultimate sacrifice, to hang on a cross and be the representation of His love and forgiveness in the flesh. Jesus offers a pardon for our sins. A pardon is the action of forgiving or being forgiven for an error or offense. Throughout scripture, we see God’s people confess and return to Him. The Israelites in Nehemiah 9 gather to collectively confess their sins after returning from an extended time of exile from their country as a result of their rebellion toward God. We see the Psalmist remembering God’s mercy and pardon towards sin. They all seem to recognize the magnitude of God’s mercy, compassion, and love. They know their sin warrants justice, but God’s love moves him to forgive. We see Jesus in His ministry repeatedly offering forgiveness of sins and telling His disciples during the Last Supper that His blood will be poured out to forgive sin.

As Darrel Bock puts it in the *NIV Application Commentary*:

*The cross is, at its heart, the offer of God’s gracious forgiveness to those who embrace it. To embrace the cross means to renounce our own works as the basis of our salvation. Our relationship with God comes through trusting in Jesus and in his finished work. The cross offers an opportunity of a new life, lived with a clean slate before God. That offer comes by God’s grace, with nothing for us to earn. If we accept his grace, God begins a new walk with us. Our spiritual well-being rests solidly and securely in the hands of a caring heavenly Father.*

As the words of this great hymn remind us: Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe. Sin had left a crimson stain. He washed it white as snow.



### **REFLECTION**

Meditate on Nehemiah 9. The Israelites were returning from being exiled from their country due to their sin and unfaithfulness to God. This chapter records their recommitment to the LORD. Use these words to remind your heart of our faithful God who forgives. Ask God to remind you of His extravagant offer of forgiveness. Use this as a time to bring your confessions to Him to allow His forgiveness to wash over you. Pray through the words in Psalm 86.

Luke 23:34, Luke 10:23-24, Micah 4:12,  
Acts 3:13-26; 13:26-28, 17:24-30, 1 Corinthians 2:7-16,  
Ephesians 4:17-24

**“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**

## FOR THEY KNOW NOT WHAT THEY DO - SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

In God’s Word, we see countless examples of religious leaders who truly believed they were following God and doing what was right. Many religious leaders’ “rightness” led Jesus straight to the cross. They were missing the Messiah standing before them because they didn’t heed the warnings and prophecies in Old Testament scriptures. Yet, on the cross, Jesus says, “They know not what they do.” They likely didn’t understand the eternal significance of their current earthly choices. Many of us do the very same thing daily.

The *ESV Global Study Bible* says:

*His death was the basis upon which those who crucified him could be forgiven. “They know not what they do” does not take away the responsibility of the religious or political leaders for Jesus’ death, but it shows that they did not fully understand the horrible evil that they were doing in crucifying the “Holy and Righteous One.”*

How amazing is it that through the death of Jesus on the cross, God was making a way for those who put Him to death to be forgiven and given a second chance. Peter’s preaching later converted many who had a hand in Jesus’ death. In one sense, these men did know that they were brutally killing a man, but they didn’t fully understand that they were killing the Son of God, nor did they fully understand what the consequences of their current actions would be. Yet even from the cross, Jesus modeled the radical nature of the forgiveness He taught. In a biblical sense, ignorance is more of a difference between knowledge and wisdom. One might know God and His commands but lack the wisdom to seek His ways and let His commands transform their actions. In some ways, it is a spiritual blindness that the enemy or our sinfulness can cause. It’s the difference between knowing God and following God with your life. Following our desires and ways can lead to spiritual blindness. As God’s truth is revealed to us, we no longer have the excuse that we did not know. Humanity’s ignorance doesn’t change God’s ultimate plan. As followers of Jesus, Paul states, we have been given “the mind of Christ” to understand and make wiser choices. Even when we “know not what we do,” our sin still has consequences for us and others. We do not sin in a vacuum. God’s forgiveness of sin doesn’t take away the pain that sin might cause, but if we are faithful to confess and repent, God promises to redeem that sin for us to be back in right standing with Him. The key for us as believers is to continue to seek His wisdom to be revealed to us more fully each day. Praise God that our desire to sin is no match for God’s desire to forgive and offer us a new way to live. Let’s live as children of light, no longer in the darkness.



### REFLECTION

Reflect today on what it means to have “the mind of Christ.” How can one seek to fully understand the world better by looking through the eyes of Christ?

Isaiah 53:11-12, Luke 22:31-32, Hebrews 5:7, 7:25, 1 Timothy 2:5, John 17:9-26, Ephesians 6:18, James 5:16, Romans 8:34-39, 1 John 2:1-2

**“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**

## JESUS INTERCEDES ON OUR BEHALF

Prayer was at the center of Jesus’ relationship to His Father. We see prayer as a central rhythm in Jesus’ life. He went away often to pray in the mundane, ordinary days, in the busy seasons, when facing critical moments in His life, and when He was burdened for others. Jesus valued prayer. It allowed Him deep communion with His Father and showed Jesus’ submission to the Father. As the letter to the Hebrews put it, “In the days of Jesus’ life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears...and he was heard because of his reverent submission.” One of the most beautiful examples of Jesus interceding on our behalf is His prayer in John 17. Seeing Jesus’ example of prayer led His disciples to ask Jesus to teach them how to pray. On the cross, we see Jesus intercede on behalf of others; this moment on the cross is prophesied in Isaiah 53, saying, “he will intercede on behalf of rebels.” As far as we know, no one expresses remorse in front of Him, yet Jesus forgives and prays for them. For those familiar with this prophecy, this prayer from the cross would have confirmed His identity as the Messiah. We also see evidence that this intercessory prayer was answered as some of those unbelievers later come to see God’s love through what Jesus did on the cross.

What is intercession? Simply put, it is praying on behalf of another person. This prayer on the cross is one of forgiveness, yes, but also, in a way, it is a prayer for wisdom and understanding, a prayer of salvation and healing. Jesus is interceding like this for us even now. Romans 8 and 1 John 1 tell us He sits on the Father’s right hand pleading for us.

The *Encyclopedia of the Bible* says:

*This intercession is not only for those who sentenced and crucified Jesus, but for all of humanity—a people who have no insight into the profound mystery of God’s salvation. Jesus speaks these words not as a request but with divine authority. The intercession of Christ refers to prayer offered by Christ on behalf of others. It is frequently understood as the activity He exercises in this respect in His exalted glory at the right hand of the Father.*

Jesus tells Simon Peter in Luke 22, once you repent and turn to me again, strengthen your brothers. This prayer can be an example for us as we begin to intercede in prayer for others. We are called to intercede for one another. May we be people who pray to strengthen our brothers and sisters, earnestly crying out to the Father on their behalf of others, just as Jesus did on the cross and continues to do for us even today.



## REFLECTION

Ask God to reveal someone who needs your prayers. Use Jesus’ words in John 17 as a guide to pray for that person.

Luke 15:11-32, Ephesians 5:1-2, 1 Peter 1:13-22; 2:21-25,  
Acts 7:54-60

**“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**

## JESUS SAYS, “FOLLOW MY LEAD”

Jesus knew the vision of God’s redemption plan would require humility, suffering, and radical forgiveness. Jesus is showing the same compassion and forgiveness in His time of suffering that He did throughout His life and ministry. The example He laid out before us is hard to follow, yet we know it is possible. We’ve all heard stories where people are able to practice radical forgiveness, and we often wonder if we would be able to do the same. In situations where a crime has been committed, yet the family can forgive, how? Like Jesus, they likely know that each of us is more than the worst thing we’ve ever done. When we can see people through the eyes of Jesus, realizing that “all fall short of the glory of God” and we are all “made in the image of God,” we can begin to soften to forgiveness. Forgiveness like this seems great in theory but is far more challenging to practice.

Of course, Jesus could do this, but let’s look at the life of Stephen. He was stoned to death for his faith, and looking to Jesus’ example, he died with a similar prayer of forgiveness on his lips. He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” Just as Jesus asked His Father to forgive those who crucified Him, so Stephen asked God to give his murderers a chance to repent. God’s grace enables us to do what we could never do alone. Once we grasp the radical forgiveness of Jesus, our only option is to forgive in this same way. This kind of forgiveness frees us from a prison of resentment and anger. This kind of forgiveness often seems impossible, especially if the wrong done to us is severe.

Forgiveness doesn’t mean that we forget the wrong that has been done. It doesn’t discount the hurt and pain caused, but it does release the control that person or their actions have over you and your future. It isn’t always contingent on getting an apology or a reconciliation in a relationship. We can choose to cancel the debt owed by someone else and decide to want good for them. Forgiveness is rarely a one-and-done act. It often takes daily, sometimes even moment-by-moment, choices to forgive. Jesus wants us to live in His freedom, and this kind of forgiveness is the only way. This kind of radical forgiveness is only possible if we rely on the power of the LORD; it is impossible in our strength. He can work with the slightest desire to forgive, ask Him for help, and lean on His strength.



## REFLECTION

Take time to look back at your own story and the story of the Prodigal Son, reflecting on God’s forgiveness along your journey. How does God’s forgiveness impact your ability to forgive others? Are there people in your life to whom you need to offer forgiveness? Are there people from whom you need to seek forgiveness? Think about how forgiveness could free your heart and help you move forward.

Week 1, Day 5

# Friday

Matthew 5:7-12; 5:43-48; 20:26-28, Luke 6:27-36, John 18:36-37,  
Philippians 2:3-8

**“Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they are doing.”**

**Luke 23:34**

## A CITIZEN OF AN UPSIDE-DOWN KINGDOM

As they put Him to death, they mocked His title, the “King of the Jews.” They didn’t understand this kingdom that Jesus came to establish. Jesus showed mercy even to those who opposed Him. When He is on the cross, He looks at those torturing Him with mercy and has compassion for their ignorance. Everything about Jesus’ life points to an upside-down kingdom. Jesus’ words... “Bless those who curse you, pray for your enemies, the first shall be last, and the last shall be first, blessed are those who show mercy.” These words would have been counter-cultural at a time when the way of the world was one ruled by power, success, and violence. He was establishing something new that most people at the time didn’t understand. Even His devoted disciples were perplexed at times. Jesus’s ways were radically different. His forgiveness of His enemies and praying for his enemies was unheard of. But these things were the foundation of the new kingdom He was coming to establish, one that seemed upside-down.

In Matthew 20:28, Jesus says, “The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.” This statement reveals the fundamental truth of the upside-down kingdom of God, where the world’s way is turned on its head. A kingdom where the least of these are the most valued, and the most humble are the most powerful. They think Jesus is weak and losing the battle, but in this upside-down kingdom, He is strong, mighty, and powerful in death as it ushers in victory and His seat on the throne. God’s plan would not be thwarted; even His enemies played into fulfilling His plan. In a way, our sin makes us all enemies, yet God, in His graciousness and forgiveness, made a way for us to have new life through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. As believers in Christ, we are privileged to live in this upside-down kingdom. We have the power of the Spirit within us, enabling us to love as Jesus loved, serve as Jesus served, and forgive as Jesus forgave. We are to be counter-cultural living as part of this upside-down kingdom that may not make sense to the world.

*My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world*  
- John 18:36



### REFLECTION

What does it look like to live each day as a citizen of this upside-down kingdom?



Week 1, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Jesus' last words from Luke 23:34, "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*" As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read Luke 23:34. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change how we see Him and how we live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

Week 1, Day 7

# Sunday

## Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.

Week 2 **Sermon**  
**Notes**

**FEBRUARY 18, 2024**

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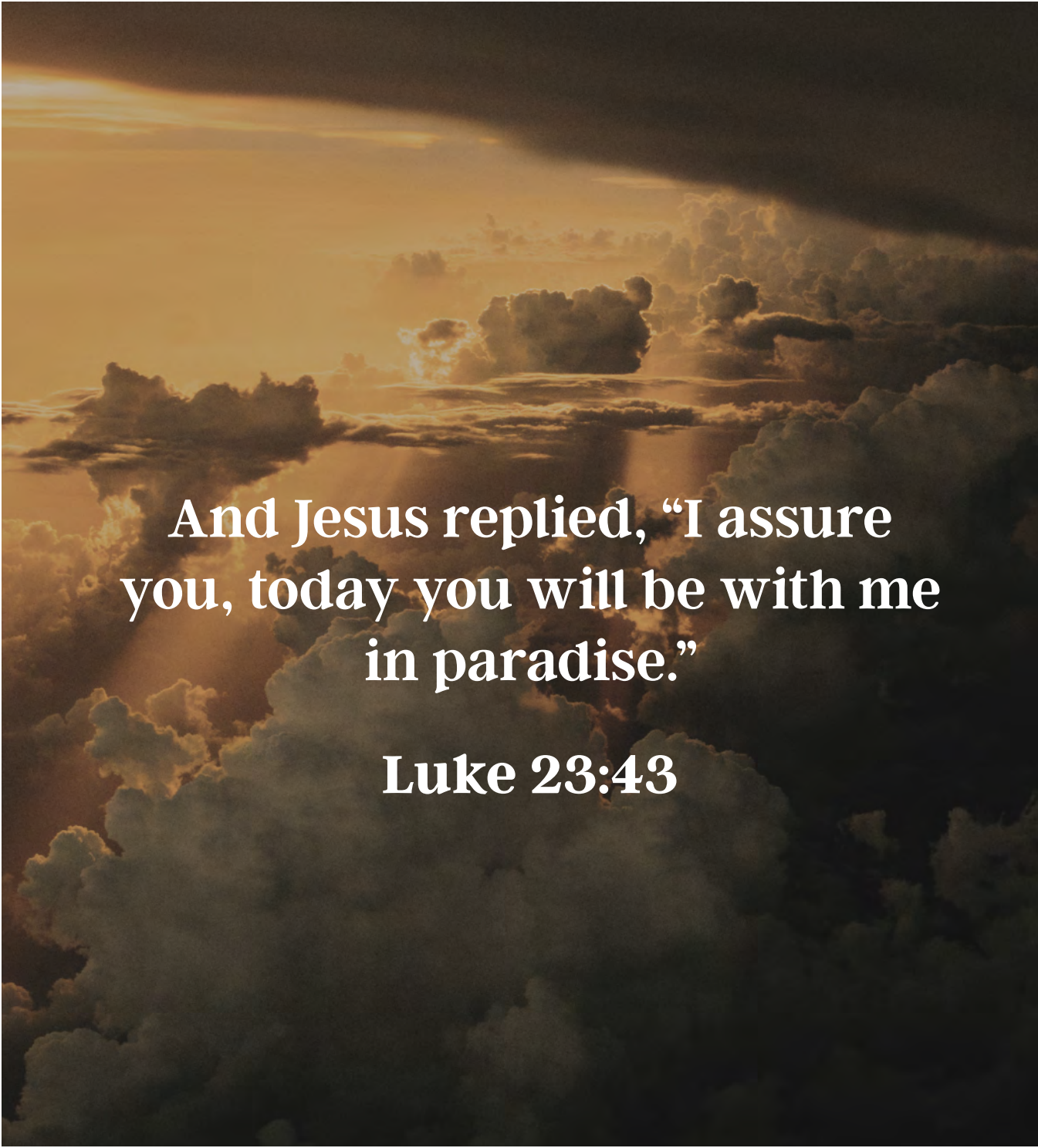
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And Jesus replied, “I assure  
you, today you will be with me  
in paradise.”

**Luke 23:43**

**LAST WORDS.**

**Week 2**

Week 2, Day 1

# Monday

Luke 23:26-43, Romans 10:9-13, Titus 3:4-7

**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

**Luke 23:43**

## THE NEED FOR SALVATION

The scene is laid out clearly for us: Jesus, the Son of God, has been convicted, tortured, sentenced to death and is now fulfilling that sentence through His crucifixion. As He hangs upon the cross, struggling to survive, He is between two other crucified men, criminals. Unlike the innocent Jesus, these men are truly guilty of a crime and paying the price.

What these two men say to Jesus on the cross is deeply important for us today. One criminal looks at Jesus and mocks Him. He rejects who He says He is. He expresses only a selfish desire to get out of his punishment. The other criminal, however, responds with four essential professions of faith in the person of Jesus. He first acknowledges fear and belief in God (“Do you not fear God?”); secondly, he admits his faults, his sins (“We deserve to die..”); thirdly, he acknowledges Jesus’ righteousness (“...this man hasn’t done anything wrong.”); finally, he declares Jesus as King (“...remember me when you come into your Kingdom.”). The response of the criminal is the response of the righteous and saved.

Over and over again in scripture, we see that pride, arrogance, and foolishness are what lead us to sin and also what lead us to think that the only thing that can save us from our sin is ourselves. The greatest folly of our lives is believing the lie that we are not that bad or can do better by just being better. The truth is that we are incapable of saving ourselves. It is only through faith in Jesus that we are made free.

If we are willing to be humble, repentant, and faithful like the second criminal crucified on the cross beside Jesus, we will be given the same promise Jesus gave to him. “I assure you, today, you will be with me in paradise.” Jesus uses His final words to hit home the entire purpose of His life on earth, that He desires to be with us in paradise, and the only way to do that is to see what is keeping us from Him and humbly seek forgiveness and life in Him.



## REFLECTION

For some of us, the decision to believe and the confession to follow Jesus is one we made long ago. For others, it is one we have never made. Regardless of where you stand today, reflect on Luke 23:26-43 by studying the words of the criminals (specifically the second criminal) and Jesus’ last words that He shares with him. Study these other passages (Acts 4:12, John 14:6, Matthew 19:16-26, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 3:16-18) that share what salvation looks like and requires from us. Finally, spend time in prayer confessing your need and desire for Jesus’ salvation in your life.

*\*If you make a decision today about salvation or have more questions about the salvation Jesus offers us, please reach out to us at [grace@graceclarksville.com](mailto:grace@graceclarksville.com).*

Week 2, Day 2

# Tuesday

Matthew 11:28-30, Acts 4:11-12, John 14:6, Romans 8:38-39

**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

**Luke 23:43**

## PARADISE IN HIM

When Jesus looks at the criminal being crucified beside Him, he says, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” He’s not simply referring to heaven but what heaven represents. When we think of eternal paradise, or heaven, we often harken more toward the imagery found in Bugs Bunny cartoons or Greek Mythology. We think of a city in the clouds or tiny cupid wings on the backs of individuals who fly around and play harps. However, this is not the imagery we see in scripture of what heaven, or paradise, looks like.

According to scripture, Heaven is many unique and mysterious things, but first and foremost, it is a place of union. Paradise is so named because it is the eternal soul-body dwelling of man with God. Nothing is greater in all eternity or creation than our union with our Creator. It is the fulfillment of time and the purpose of our lives.

In the simplest way to explain it, paradise is paradise because it has God in it. Heaven represents an eternal relationship with Jesus. Heaven is the home free from all distraction, sin, corruption, and devastation that attempts to separate us from Him. It is being at home with God. One of the clearest examples of this is when Jesus says in Matthew 11:28, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” The declaration of Jesus offering rest immediately brings to mind the imagery of our heavenly Father opening His arms wide for us as we run and snuggle deep within His embrace. We are at home when we are with God.

The most wonderful news for us today is that we don’t have to wait to experience a taste of this paradise; we have to be willing to prioritize our lives around running into the embrace of Jesus daily.



## REFLECTION

Let’s practice the taste of paradise right now by drawing near to Jesus. Take at least ten minutes to lie down, close your eyes, and picture paradise as we see it in scripture- an eternal relationship with Jesus. Warm and open your heart to what that kind of rest, or embrace, from the Lord might feel like. After this time of reflection, write down what emotions you felt and end your time by thanking Christ for the invitation to an eternal relationship with Him.

Week 2, Day 3

# Wednesday

**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

**Luke 23:43**

Luke 23:26-43, Revelation 21:1-7, 2 Corinthians 12:1-4

## PARADISE IN FREEDOM

C.S. Lewis' masterpiece series The Chronicles of Narnia ends with the book The Last Battle. In this final tale, the animals, humans, and creatures of Narnia fight to save their home of Narnia. Every book in this series has been fighting for this fantasy world, but in the climax, a doorway is revealed that leads to the home, or the country, of the Christ-like figure of the series, the lion Aslan. In the final paragraph of the book, Lewis paints a picture of Aslan's country that seems familiar to us,

*“And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page: now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story which no one on earth has read: which goes on for ever: in which every chapter is better than the one before.” -C.S. Lewis The Last Battle*

Scripture gives us a small glimpse into what heaven will look like. It's not exhaustive and intensely detailed, but we know that our Savior will be there, peace will be forevermore, and happily ever after will be the new beginning of our story. Scripture makes clear that in paradise, we find freedom with God, freedom from the corruption and pain of the world, and freedom everlasting.



## REFLECTION

Take a moment to thank God for the heavenly home that He has invited us to. Thank Him for the promise of His presence for all of eternity. Finally, ask Him to help you feel a glimpse of this future eternity today on earth by helping you draw near to Him.

**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

**Luke 23:43**

## REMEMBER ME

*“Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” That is what the second thief said. In the Old Testament, when God “remembers,” it has a distinct meaning. It does not mean “to think about” or “to recall to mind.” That would not mean very much. When God “remembers,” he does not just think about us. He acts for us, with power to save. Somehow the crucified criminal on Jesus’ right was enabled to see something that day that no one else saw. He saw Jesus reigning as a King and determining the destinies of people even in his tormented and dying state. To see him that way, Luke is telling us, is to see him as he truly is and to understand the source of his power. Not by signs and wonders, not by magic and dazzlement, not by “shock and awe,” but only by an ultimate act of God’s own self-sacrifice does Christ rule. His power is made known only through his death.” - Fleming Rutledge *The Seven Last Words from the Cross**

Jesus’ words to the criminal who asks Him to remember him are a powerful reminder for us today. That reminder is about how Christ not only thinks of us in His heavenly dwelling, but He also acts for us. His words to the criminal are the exact words He uses for every one of us who has looked to Him for salvation. The beautiful thing we can experience on this side of heaven is the power that comes from remembering Him, too. We walk in the steps toward heaven when we remember and act in accordance with God’s will. This act reminds us that He has done the same for us.



## REFLECTION

Take time today to think of what Christ has done for you. Think mostly of His sacrifice. His crucifixion. His suffering. Remember Christ’s gift to you today. Think also of the gifts of heaven and grace that He bestows upon you daily through His creation, through a good meal, through laughter with friends, through the warmth of a child or spouse’s embrace. Thank Him for these remembrances He pours out to us, and ask Him to help you remember Him and act in His way today.

Week 2, Day 5

# Friday

Luke 23:39-43, Isaiah 40:28-31, Psalm 27:13-14

**“I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise.”**

**Luke 23:43**

## COMFORT IN THE WAITING

One of the greatest sufferings we can relate to in the crucifixion narrative is the waiting that is taking place. The torturous act of crucifixion was designed to inflict long-suffering and waiting. Those who were nailed to a cross would typically suffer for days before succumbing to suffocation or their injuries. The cross is a real image of long suffering. It also is a personal reminder for us of the long-suffering that we experience in life.

We all bear a cross of suffering in this life. The sufferings of sickness, anxiety, heartache, insecurity, loneliness, and fear are all too real for us in this life. When we read Jesus’ words to the criminal, “Today, you will be with me in paradise,” we read the words of longing that exist deep in our hearts. The words that Jesus shares with this criminal are the words we desire for our own lives. We desire to be made whole, right, free from suffering in the presence of Jesus in paradise, but we must wait. We have to continue to walk through the suffering of our Christian lives. As we walk through we can find comfort in the waiting. Our comfort is found in the crucified Christ, who walks with us in our suffering.



## REFLECTION

Where do you feel suffering in your life right now? Maybe you are anxious about the world, maybe about a family member or loved one, perhaps your health, or disappointment with a career or life trajectory. The suffering we feel is typically not too hard to acknowledge, but it can be hard to let go of. It is hard to lift our suffering to Christ and trust that He will take them, help us through them, and comfort us throughout them. Begin the practice of finding Christ’s comfort in your waiting by giving your suffering to Him today. He has nailed our pain with Him on the cross. Thank Him for that and seek His help to walk in remembrance of this truth.



Week 2, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Jesus' last words from Luke 23:43, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read Luke 23:43. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change how we see Him and live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

Week 2, Day 7

# Sunday

## Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.

Week 3 **Sermon**  
**Notes**

**FEBRUARY 25, 2024**

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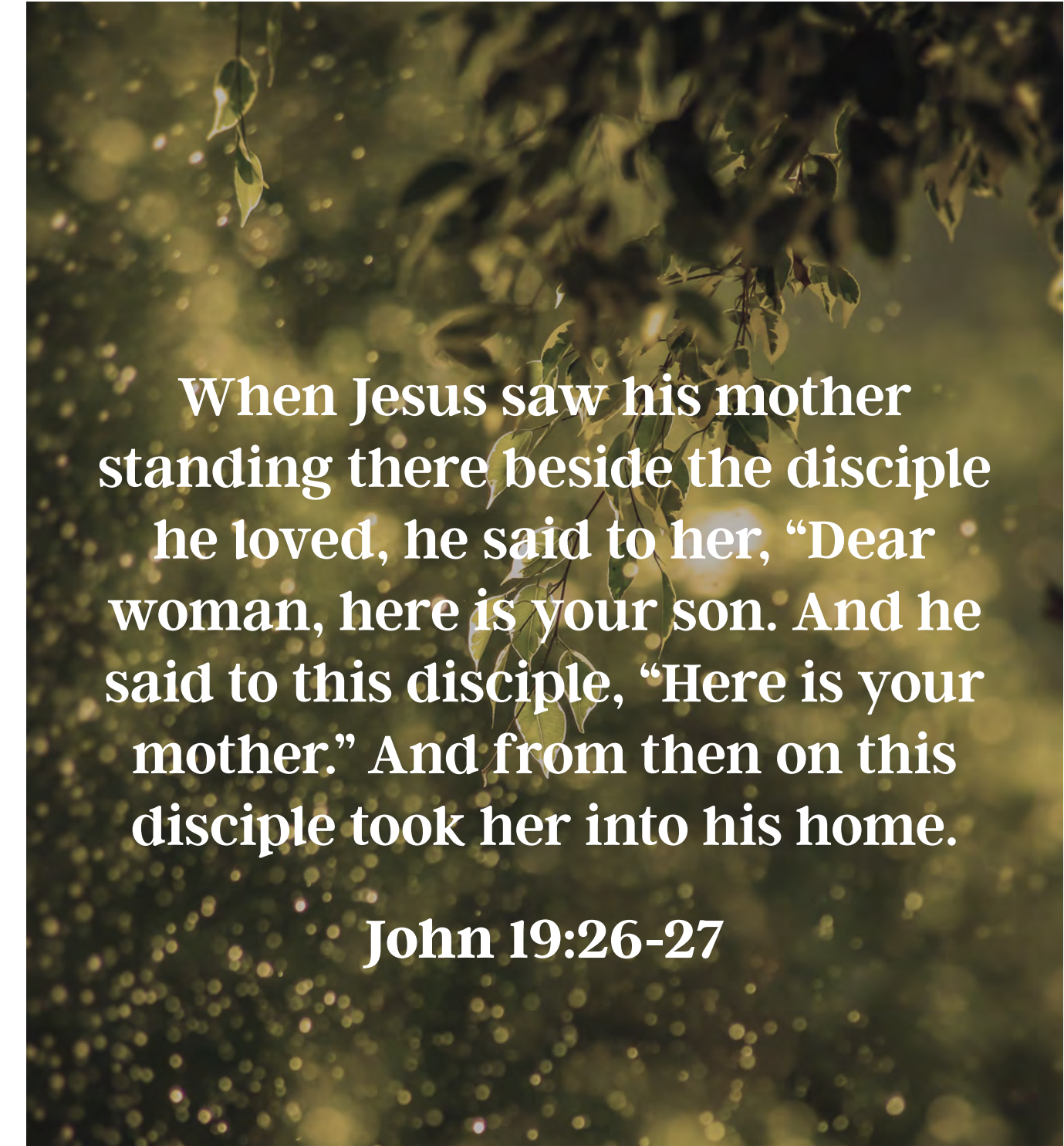
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When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home.

**John 19:26-27**

**LAST WORDS.**

**Week 3**

Week 3, Day 1

# Monday

John 19:25-27; 7:1-9, Matthew 13:55-58, Luke 2:25-35,  
Isaiah 40:10-11

**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

**John 19:26-27**

## PROVISION AND CARE FOR OTHERS

These instructions from Jesus on the cross given to His mother and His disciple John show His love and concern for His mother. As He was dying, Jesus knew that a sword was piercing through Mary’s soul as well, as Simeon had prophesied 33 years before in Luke 2.

*As Mary and Joseph brought their newborn son Jesus to the temple for dedication, a godly man named Simeon saw Jesus, took Him in his arms, and blessed the baby Jesus. Yet he also said this to Mary: Yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also. Mary experienced this throughout the ministry of her Son as He was rejected, opposed, slandered, and plotted against. Yet this was the ultimate fulfillment of that solemn promise. Of all those who looked upon Jesus at the cross, none suffered as Mary did. Jesus consciously cared for His mother to the end, showing that even on the cross, His attention was directed to others and not upon Himself. If there was ever a moment when Jesus deserved to be self-focused, this was it, yet He remained others-centered to the end. Mary had other children born after Jesus, and there are references to both the half brothers and sisters of Jesus. Despite this, Jesus left the care of His mother, Mary, to John, the disciple and apostle. - David Guzik - Enduring Word Commentary*

We don’t fully know why Jesus chose to leave Mary in John’s care since scripture tells us He had various brothers and sisters. We know that during His earthly ministry, John 7:5 tells us that “even his brothers didn’t believe in him.” Whatever the reason, these words on the cross show that Jesus did ask John to treat Mary as his mother and told Mary to rely on John as she would her own son. We see evidence that Mary went to John’s home and continued to be a part of growing the Kingdom after Jesus’ resurrection. This moment on the cross shows Jesus’ loving provision and care for others, even amid His suffering. It was an honor for John to be chosen to care for Jesus’ mother, and it was a kindness for Mary to be cared for by a son who Jesus knew would continue His ministry after He was gone.



## REFLECTION

So often, amid our hard times and suffering, we forget to look around us to see the needs of others. What can we learn from Jesus’s example today of how to lift our eyes during our hard times and trials to continue to show care and concern for others?

Mark 3:31-35, Acts 1:12-14, Romans 8:16-25, Galatians 3:26-29,  
Ephesians 2:19-22, Hebrews 2:11-18

**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

**John 19:26-27**

## THE START OF A NEW FAMILY

This statement from Jesus on the cross to His mother and beloved disciple might have a deeper meaning than just one of care and concern for His mother. Many scholars feel these words may also allude to the beginning of the family of believers, now connected specifically because of their devotion to Jesus.

Fleming Rutledge says in *The Seven Last Words of Christ*,

*It is about the new community that comes into being through the power of Jesus. We very often hear people say that they can be religious without coming to church. But the Christian community has a quality that the critiques do not take into consideration. When the Christian community is working the way it is supposed to, people are brought together who have absolutely nothing in common, who may have diametrically different views on things, who may even actively dislike each other. Personal likes and dislikes have nothing to do with the body of Christ. “There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” By rewriting the covenant in his own blood, Jesus has done something completely new. In giving his mother to the disciple, he is causing a new relationship to come into existence that did not exist before. They represent the way that family ties are transcended in the church by the ties of the Spirit. He is setting aside the blood relationship in order to create a much wider family. We see that Jesus is calling people into a new relationship with him and with one another. It is not that he has no room for his own family. What we see happening here, however, is that mothers and fathers and cousins and sisters are newly created by the Spirit of Christ where there is no blood relationship whatsoever, and sometimes no obvious similarity or even affection. It is the new covenant written in the blood of Jesus.*

Jesus alludes to this new kind of family earlier in His ministry in an interesting encounter in Mark 3 when He says, “Anyone who does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother.” Jesus is hinting here at a new kind of family that will be established after His death and resurrection, one connected by their beliefs rather than blood. Our final glimpse of Jesus’ mother, Mary, in scripture, is in Acts 1. Mary was gathered with all the disciples in the upper room after Jesus’ ascension. She is safe in the care of John, praying and sharing with this new community as they begin to carry on the mission Jesus started. Mary is likely beginning to see that her beloved son’s death had an eternal purpose that she and her new family could now carry forward that would later become known as the Church.



## REFLECTION

Reflect today on what it means to be a part of a family of believers, one where we might have nothing in common, one where there might be disagreements, yet one united under the blood of Christ. What does being a part of this new family called the Church mean to you?

*The Church’s one foundation is Jesus Christ her Lord; She is his new creation by water and the Word: From heaven he came and sought her to be his holy Bride; With his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died. - Samuel John Stone*

Week 3, Day 3

# Wednesday

*Romans 3:21-31; 5:20-21, Ephesians 2:1-10,  
Colossians 1:6-29; 3:10-17*

**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

**John 19:26-27**

## **A FAMILY CONNECTED BY HIS GRACE**

In this new family formed at the cross, Jesus establishes relationships and connections based on His saving grace. These connections of grace supersede all other connections, even close family connections. We see this upside-down kingdom of Jesus begin to flourish even at the foot of the cross, and it continues to grow after His resurrection and ascension. We don't know exactly who was present at the cross, but we do have accounts of a large crowd that included women, soldiers, chief priests, followers of Jesus, and members of the Sanhedrin, among many others. All types of people representing different ethnicities, beliefs, and convictions were gathered there to witness the death of Jesus. It's a beautiful picture of how Jesus draws people to Himself and offers Himself as a living sacrifice for all - no matter their past, ethnicity, or political affiliation. It was a blanket offer of grace, mercy, and redemption of sins for all who accepted Him as their Lord. At the foot of the cross, all who say yes to Jesus become connected by His grace. With this picture of our victorious Savior in his heart, Paul teaches the early church about these connections of grace. Grace is made available to all of us through the death and resurrection of Christ. We don't deserve this grace, and we did nothing to earn it; it is a free gift from the Father through His Son. As Romans 3 tells us, we have all fallen short of the glory of God, and yet God, in His grace, freely makes us right in His sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when He freed us from the penalty for our sins.

What does this connection by grace mean for us? Colossians 3 lays it out clearly. We are to put on a new, renewed nature to become more like Christ because if you believe in this new kingdom, Christ lives in you. We must clothe ourselves with mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. We are to make allowances for each other's faults and forgive as God forgave us. We are bound together to one another in love, and as members of one body, we are to live in peace and be thankful. In everything we do or say, we are to be a representative of Jesus.



## **REFLECTION**

What does grace mean to you? How can reflecting on this grace offered to us all on the cross make you feel more connected to others in the family of God? How can understanding the grace offered to you help you to extend grace to those around you?

Week 3, Day 4

# Thursday

Matthew 28:18-20, John 14:15-30; 16:5-15, Acts 1:6-11; 2:22-41,  
1 Corinthians 12:12-27

**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

**John 19:26-27**

## A FAMILY FILLED WITH HIS SPIRIT

Jesus connected Mary and John in a new family that would continue without Him, but they would never be alone. Not only had He promised to leave them a helper after His death, but they also had each other. Imagine what it must have been like for Jesus’ followers in the days after His death. They likely felt very alone and questioned their belief in the Messiah. They knew what Jesus had said about sending a helper, an advocate, the Holy Spirit, to be with them after He was gone. He told them it was best for them if He went to be with the Father and for this advocate to come. We have to wonder what they thought during the days after Jesus’ death. They gathered together to pray, grieve, and support each other in a hard time. Their hope was likely fading as the days went on. News of His resurrection started to spread on the third day, and hope was restored as the resurrected Jesus gathered His disciples. Jesus commissioned them to work together to grow this family, making disciples of all nations. With this commissioning comes the promise that He would be with them always, even to the end of the age. Jesus again promises to send the Holy Spirit to fill them with power. Then we see in Acts 1 & 2 that the Holy Spirit comes at Pentecost, and over 3000 came to Jesus that day as Peter told them to repent and turn to the LORD. In the time Jesus was with His followers, He had been their source of strength and help, but now they would have a counselor, comforter, guide, companion, advocate, teacher, and intercessor dwelling in them to help and encourage them forever. This same promise is made to us if we put our faith in Him. We have access to this same Spirit to help, guide, comfort, and lead us daily. As a family of believers filled with His Spirit, we need each other to support one another in times of suffering and celebrate in rejoicing.

*Here, at the very end, we see Jesus still exercising love and care. In the course of his ministry, Jesus was forming a new community around himself, and in the farewell discourse, he described how that community is to share in his own relation with the Father and to participate in the divine life, which is characterized by love. Now, he has completed the formation of this community, at least for the stage prior to the sending of the Spirit and his own dwelling with them in a new way. - IVP New Testament Commentary*



## REFLECTION

Jesus says the Holy Spirit will teach us, remind us of the truth, and comfort us in our time of need. Can you think of a time when you could feel the presence of the Spirit with you when you should have been lonely? In what ways do you see evidence of the Spirit in your life?

Acts 2:42-47, Romans 12:9-18, Ephesians 4:1-4, Philippians 2:1-11,  
1 John 4:7-12, John 13:34-35

**“Dear woman, here is your son. And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

**John 19:26-27**

## A FAMILY FUELED BY HIS LOVE

*When Jesus commends his mother to the care of John the Beloved Disciple, he is, at one level, taking care of a bit of important housekeeping, arranging the world he is leaving as best he could. In a larger sense, he is leaving a model for his followers to love one another in the most profound and powerful of ways. This is a fundamental call to fix our eyes not inwardly but outwardly on one another and, ultimately, on the cross. The gospel injunction about how we are to conduct ourselves in this world is clear. We should, with John, who accepts the charge to become a son to Mary, take care of one another, remembering always that it is through love that we glimpse the divine and touch the cross of Christ. - Jon Meacham - The Hope of Glory*

The Church should be marked and fueled by His love. We see in Acts how the early Church devoted themselves to teaching, fellowship, sharing meals, and prayer. As Paul addressed the Church throughout the New Testament, he told them things like:

- Take delight in honoring each other.
- Work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically.
- When God’s people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.
- Be happy with those who are happy and weep with those who weep.
- Live in harmony with each other. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.
- Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.
- Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.

One of Jesus’ last commands to His disciples was to “Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.”

This is the vision for this new family that Christ established on the cross, one connected by grace, filled with His Spirit, and fueled by His love. May we take the call to be an active, engaged part of this family called the Church seriously. This doesn’t happen by simply attending a church; it comes as we begin to make ourselves at home in our Church by connecting, engaging, giving, and serving together.



## REFLECTION

Reflect on all we’ve learned this week about the new family established by Jesus. Do you see the Church in this way, as a family? How can you be more actively engaged in the family of God here at Grace?



Week 3, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Jesus' last words from John 19:26-27 - *When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, "Dear woman, here is your son." And he said to this disciple, "Here is your mother."* As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read John 19:26-27. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change how we see Him and how we live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

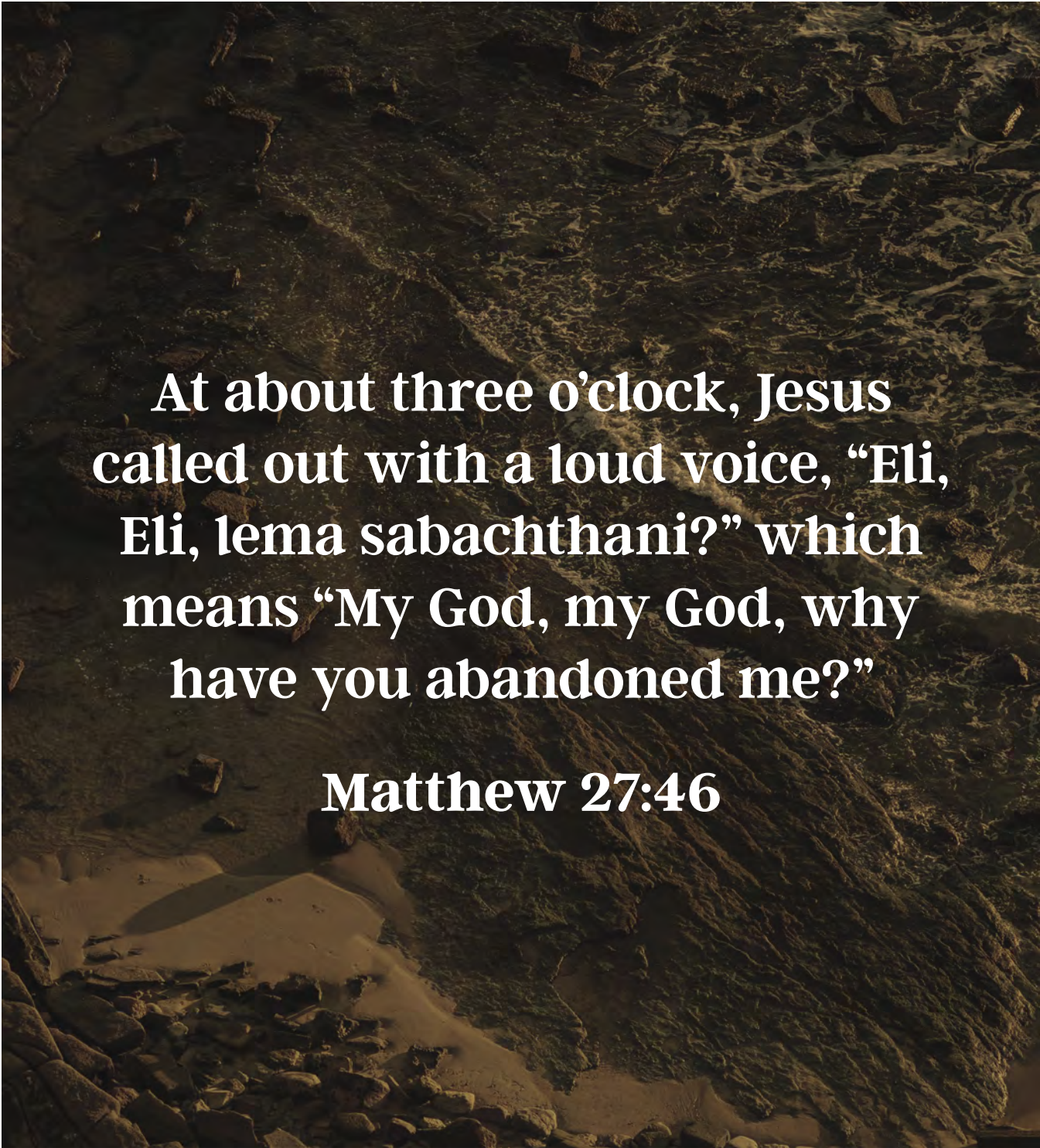
Week 3, Day 7

# Sunday

## Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.





**At about three o'clock, Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" which means "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?"**

**Matthew 27:46**



**LAST WORDS.**



**Week 4**

Week 4, Day 1

# Monday

Matthew 27:46, John 1:1-4, Romans 6:16-18

**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”**  
which means **“My God,  
my God, why have you  
abandoned me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

## SUBMIT TO GOD

To understand the power of Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross, we must have a basic understanding of the Trinity. At the beginning of his gospel, John takes the time to unfold the power of the Trinity. He explains that Christ has always been with God from the beginning. He addresses the divinity and sameness of the Father and the Son, Jesus. The Trinity, in many ways, is a mystery to us on this side of heaven, but to understand Jesus' final words in Matthew 27 (“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”), We must grasp the most fundamental principle of the Trinity: God the Father and Jesus Christ are one.

Fleming Rutledge writes it this way,

*“On the Cross. Jesus voluntarily and willingly bowed his head under the power of Sin and the curse of God. We must understand that the Father did not do this to the Son; the Son and the Father are doing this together. Jesus “gives himself with his own hand,” as one of our most important Eucharistic hymns says. God is submitting to God’s own wrath. That is one of the most important reasons – perhaps the most important reason – that Jesus was crucified.”*

Jesus, God incarnate, gives Himself up on the cross and takes the full brunt of that suffering and sinful weight (which is abandonment from God) upon Himself. It is a paradox in how we try to wrap our minds around it, but Christ sacrifices Himself and takes upon Himself the abandonment that is the curse of our sin.



## REFLECTION

Have you ever really thought about this theological idea that Jesus is God sacrificed upon the cross? Have you considered the impact and weight of the loving God of the universe sacrificing Himself for our mistakes and failures? The purpose of Lent is to reflect on these questions. To remember this sacrifice. That God gave Himself up. Spend some time remembering His sacrifice. Thank Him for His love, grace, and mercy.

Week 4, Day 2

# Tuesday

Matthew 27:46, Psalm 22:1-8, Isaiah 41:10, Romans 8:38-39,  
Matthew 28:19-20

**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”  
which means “My God,  
my God, why have you  
abandoned me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

## ABANDONMENT

In yet another powerful example for us. Jesus, as He hangs upon the cross, cries out to God. He cries, “My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?” Make no mistake, the weight of carrying the world’s sins has closed Jesus out from the presence of the Father. He is taking on the curse that sin brings to our lives, abandonment from God, but there’s something greater at play here too. Jesus is crying out the prayer of the Psalmist from Psalm 22. Jesus is demonstrating yet again that He is present here upon the cross, in the prayers and lives of the Old Testament followers, and in our future. The work of the cross is not limited to the present but to all of eternity.

*“Part of the whole point of the cross is that there the weight of the world’s evil really did converge upon Jesus, blotting out the sunlight of God’s love as surely as the light of day was blotted out for three hours. Jesus is ‘giving his life as a ransom for many’, and the sin of the ‘many’, which he is bearing, has for the first and only time in his experience caused a cloud to come between him and the father he loved and obeyed, the one who had been delighted in him.” -N.T. Wright Matthew For Everyone Part 2*



## REFLECTION

It is here, in Matthew 27:46, that we get the most torturous example of Jesus’ suffering. Jesus put on the weight, burden, and pain of sin, which means He experienced the outcome of sin in its purest way: abandonment from God. Loneliness. Silence. Emptiness from the Creator. There is nothing worse in this creation than to be separated from God. Jesus took this on so we wouldn’t have to.

Reflect this morning using the passages above on the fact that Jesus never abandons you. Thank Him for His presence and invite Him to open your eyes, heart, and mind more towards His presence today.

Also, take time to pray a Psalm just as Jesus did here on the cross. Pray Psalm 107:1-3 as a prayer of thanks for Jesus’ love and sacrifice.

Week 4, Day 3

# Wednesday

Matthew 27:46, Psalm 139

**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”  
which means “My God,  
my God, why have you  
abandoned me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

## KNOWN

If you have been in church more than a handful of times, you have probably heard a pastor or someone proclaim that no one knows you better than Jesus. This is, of course, entirely true. He created you, has been with you your entire life, and knows your thoughts and nature. What we miss is that Jesus in Matthew 27:46 identifies with us in the last way possible. He personally knows our suffering and abandonment when we walk from God.

It is a weight so great upon Him that He cries out for the God He cannot feel in that moment. The crucifixion is a reminder for us that the God of the universe cares for us, sees us, lived life on earth like us, lived this life perfectly like we cannot, but also carried the weight of the mistakes and punishment that we deserve and could not carry on our own. The most basic need that exists in all of us is the desire to be truly known and loved. That is why we cling to the relationships where we feel like we receive this. Far too often, though, we neglect the relationship of the One who embodies this knowledge and love for us, Jesus. Don't forget the cry that He made toward God for you because He knows you and loves you.



## REFLECTION

Who is someone you feel like you know and love on a deeper and more personal level than most? Today, reach out to them and let them know you love and care about them. Pray for them. More importantly, ask God to help you and this person to draw near to the knowledge of His warmth, love, and embrace of us.

Week 4, Day 4

# Thursday

Hebrews 13:5-6, John 14:15-18, John 16:33

**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”  
which means “My God,  
my God, why have you  
abandoned me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

## NEVER ALONE

*“In many Christian bookshops around the world today you can buy posters to hang on the wall which remind you of some aspect of the Christian faith and life. Often they have biblical texts, set against a background of glorious scenery. Sometimes they are funny. Sometimes they include poems, or short meditations.*

*One of the best known of these is called ‘Footprints’ It tells of someone looking back over their life, lived in trust with God, seeing it like a set of footprints through the sand. There are two sets of footprints most of the way; you and God, as it were, walking side by side. But sometimes - and they were always the hardest times - there was only one set. Why, you ask, did God abandon you at that moment? Back comes the answer: in those times, my child, I was carrying you.” -N.T. Wright Matthew For Everyone Part 2*



## REFLECTION

No matter what we face in this life, we can stand confidently, knowing that we don't go through it alone. Christ is with us always. From the beginning, He walked with us until the end; He carried us with Him. Take some time today to either go for a walk or sit in a quiet place. Use this time to be near God and thank Him for His presence in your life.

Week 4, Day 5

# Friday

Matthew 27:45-49, Matthew 17:10-13

**“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?”  
which means “My God,  
my God, why have you  
abandoned me?”**

**Matthew 27:46**

## **BIG MISTAKES**

The people were confused by Jesus’ shout to God in Matthew 27. Some thought He was asking for the Old Testament prophet Elijah to come and save Him. In fact, He had already commented on the misunderstood belief that Elijah hadn’t returned. He explained that John the Baptist was the representative of Elijah who came and proclaimed the coming of Jesus, but they would not listen, just as they didn’t listen now.

The people’s salvation was already here. Elijah had already come to point them to Him, but they missed the message. The greatest tragedy of life is if we miss the message that is right before us, shouting out on a cross. Jesus is our Messiah. He is our only means of salvation. Far too often, our world misses this fact. We think all religions point back to Jesus, or if we’re good enough, we’re saved, or the worst of all, that a good life is a good enough reward, and we need no saving.

We cannot make the same mistake the world has been making for hundreds of years, the very mistake that happened when Jesus hung upon a cross before them and shouted out to God. Christ is our salvation, and His death is the encouragement for the glorious day to come when we, who have put our faith in Him alone, will be united with Him once more for all of eternity in paradise.



## **REFLECTION**

What is something you find confusing about God and salvation? This week, we examined one of Jesus’ most misunderstood last words. It is important that we seek to know and put faith in Jesus, His words, and knowing Him more. Spend some time today looking into scripture to find answers to your confusions about God and salvation. If you need help, contact a friend, mentor, or one of our staff members at Grace to seek some direction.



Week 4, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Jesus' last words from Matthew 27:46, "*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*". As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read Matthew 27:46. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change how we see Him and how we live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

Week 4, Day 7

# Sunday

## Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.

Week 5 **Sermon**  
**Notes**

**MARCH 10, 2024**

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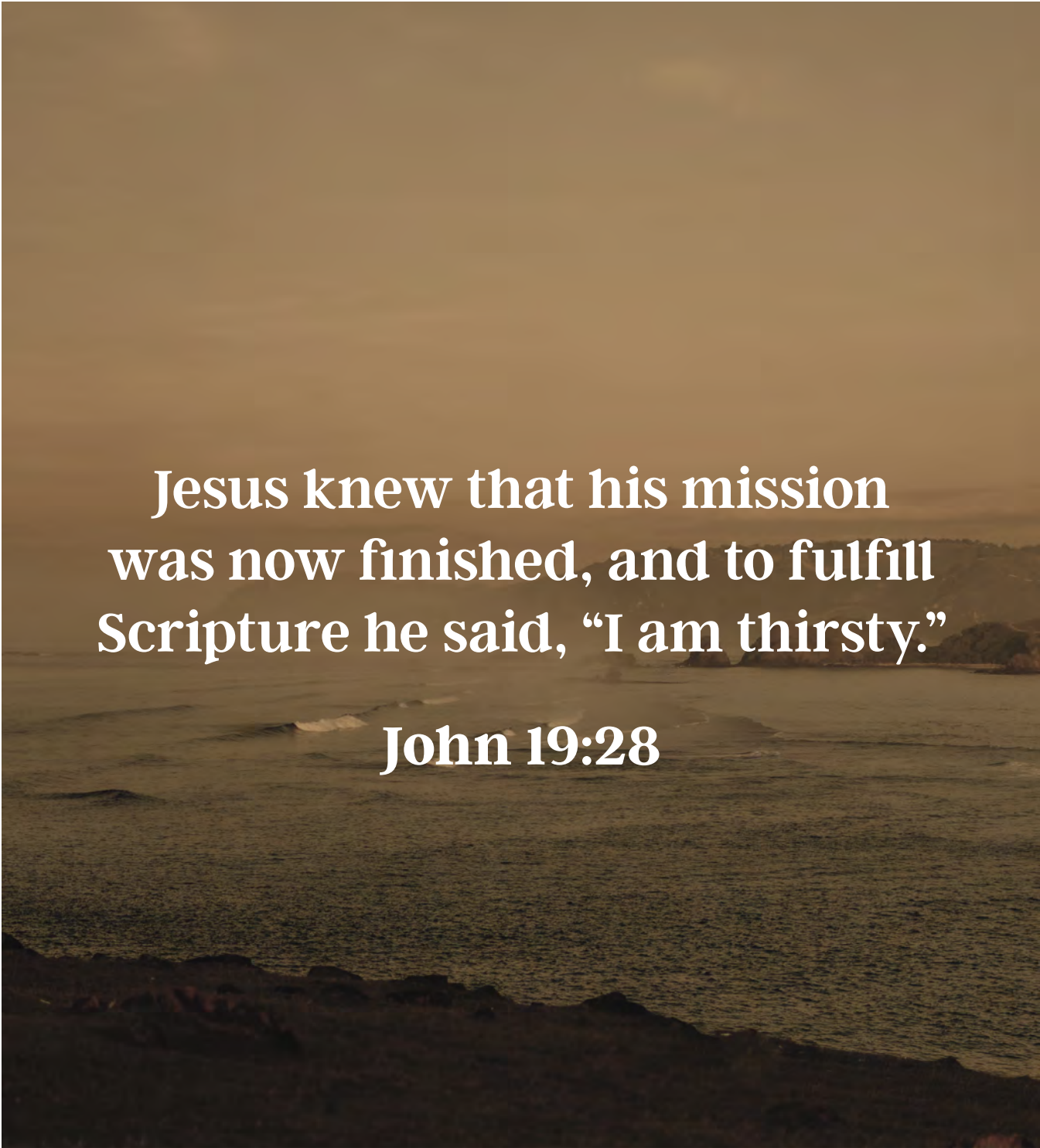
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Jesus knew that his mission  
was now finished, and to fulfill  
Scripture he said, “I am thirsty.”

**John 19:28**

**LAST WORDS.**

**Week 5**

John 19:28-29, John 1:9-14; 11:33-35, Matthew 4:1-11,  
Hebrews 4:15-16

## FULLY GOD, FULLY MAN

Jesus felt every human want and need, including thirst, because He was fully human. Jesus voluntarily came and dwelt among us, limiting Himself to the human body. We often want to overlook His humanity and focus on His divinity. But our hearts need to remember that Jesus understands the human experience. This small detail on the cross of Jesus saying “I thirst” shows us that Jesus died as a human being. He felt every lash of the whip, every painful step, every stab of the nail. He did not get a pass out of His bodily suffering. He did all of this so that we, as human beings, can be confident that He also knows what it means to suffer in our bodies. Matthew Henry, in his commentary on John 19:28, reminds us to focus on Jesus’ humanity and suffering: “It was not at all strange that he was thirsty; well, might he thirst after all the toil and hurry which he had undergone, and being now in the agonies of death, ready to expire purely by the loss of blood and extremity of pain.” Jesus understands human suffering. We have a Savior who entered into human suffering so He could intimately relate to us in our suffering. John 1 tells us that the Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us.

ESV Study Bible says it this way:

*“Became flesh” does not mean the Word ceased being God; rather, the Word, who was God, also took on humanity. This is the most amazing event in all of history: the eternal, omnipotent, omnipresent, infinitely holy Son of God took on a human nature and lived among humanity as one who was both God and man at the same time, in one person. Dwelt among us means more literally “pitched his tent”, an allusion to God’s dwelling among the Israelites in the tabernacle. In the past, God had manifested his presence to his people in the tabernacle and the temple. Now, God takes up residence among his people in the incarnate Word, Jesus Christ. Thus, the coming of Christ fulfills the OT symbolism for God’s dwelling with man in the tabernacle and the temple.*

Our hearts need to remember that just like us, Jesus was born as a baby, grew up as a child, and had a typical human experience. He felt joy and pain deeply, wrestled with temptations, and grew weary, thirsty, and tired. He navigated relationships with friends and family, likely battling the same challenges and disappointments we do.



## REFLECTION

Today, reflect on our fellowship with Jesus through our suffering. He knows our pain. Every inch of it. Why are we so often tempted to imagine Jesus as far away from our everyday lives? Thank God today for the humanity of Jesus and for a Savior who understands our suffering.

Psalm 22:14-15; 69:21, Isaiah 53:10-12, John 10:14-18

## TO FULFILL SCRIPTURE

Beyond just pointing us to Jesus' humanity, this statement from the cross also reveals Jesus' divinity. He is accomplishing God's purposes and fulfilling prophecy at this moment.

As Fleming Rutledge says in *The Seven Last Words from the Cross*:

*When he says, "I thirst," John explains that he says it "knowing that all was now finished ([and] to fulfill the scripture)." Psalm 22 contains these words: My strength is dried up like a potsherd [like baked clay], and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death. This is the Son of God speaking, the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity. Even in the midst of his helpless condition, he is manifestly aware of his divine destiny. This is the way that John has portrayed the Lord throughout his narrative, from beginning to end. In chapter 10, Jesus says, "I lay down my life for [my] sheep.... No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again; this charge I have received from my Father". The Crucifixion is not an accident, not a mistake, not an unfortunate slip-up. It is the deliberate self-offering of the Good Shepherd. And so when he says "I thirst," it is to show that he is fulfilling his purpose according to the plan of God from the beginning.*

Jesus is perfectly accomplishing the will of His Father on the cross. Matthew Henry points out in his commentary that "Jesus has respect for the scriptures: Knowing that all things hitherto were accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, which spoke of his drinking in his sufferings, he saith, I thirst, that is, he called for drink." In these last moments, Jesus is aware of the work He is on earth to do.



## REFLECTION

Spend extended time today in Psalm 22 and Psalm 69. Look for the phrases in these passages that echo and point to the Crucifixion of Jesus. Journal anything that stands out to you.

Exodus 17:1-7, Judges 15:18-20, Psalm 29:3, John 4:7-26; 7:37-38, Revelation 7:14-17

## LIVING WATER

Throughout scripture we see a God who desires to meet not only the physical needs of His people, but the spiritual needs as well. Jesus often refers to Himself as "living water" bringing life to those who are spiritually thirsty. Let's reflect on the story of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well.

*The Samaritan woman and our Lord have a memorable conversation at the well. He has no container, so when she approaches, he asks her to let him drink from her jar. This woman has an extra disadvantage: not only is her personal life disorderly, but she is also a member of a despised group. Her meeting with our Lord is therefore doubly significant. Everything that has been said so far is on the level of actual water, actual drinking. Now Jesus raises the level of the dialogue: Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?" ... Jesus said to her, "... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give ... will never thirst; the water that I shall give ... will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

*All through the Old Testament, God the Creator is praised as the One who commands the waters. He is the One who sets their boundaries and causes them to flow in courses that he has laid. He makes it rain for forty days and then calls the floods back into their beds and streams. He piles up the waters of the Red Sea on the right hand and on the left so that the children of Israel can pass through. He makes water gush from a barren rock for his people to drink in the wilderness. The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD, upon many waters.... This mighty Creator God is the same that John's Gospel identifies at the outset: "In the beginning was the Word.... All things were made through him ... and the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us". Jesus Christ, therefore – the Word made flesh – is the same One who commands living water, the water that wells up to eternal life. Following this promise to the Samaritan woman, in John 7 he stands up in the temple and proclaims, "If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water'"*

- Fleming Rutledge, *The Seven Last Words from the Cross*



## REFLECTION

*Reflect now upon the saying from the Cross, I thirst, and compare it to the saying Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give will never thirst, and If anyone thirst, let him come to me and drink. The meaning is almost too staggering to absorb. The One from whose being flows the gift of the water of eternal life–this is the One who is dying of a terrible thirst on the Cross for the love of his lost sheep. - Fleming Rutledge, *The Seven Last Words from the Cross**

John 19:28-30, John 1:29, 36, Exodus 12:22-23, Psalm 51:2-12, Hebrews 9:19-22; 10:19-23

## OUR PASSOVER LAMB

Notice the mention of "hyssop" in John 19: "They soaked a sponge...and put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips"; this is no coincidence. John likely included this detail for a specific reason. In the very first chapter of John's gospel, Jesus is referred to as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.' John's mention of the hyssop plant reminds readers to look back to the first Passover in Exodus 12. At this first Passover, Jews used hyssop to brush the Passover lamb's blood on their doorposts so that their lives would be spared. This isn't the only time hyssop is mentioned in scripture; it's significant in Leviticus 14 and Numbers 19 as hyssop was used by the priests in the cleansing ritual in the temple. We also see it mentioned by David in Psalm 51 as he is crying out to the Lord after committing adultery with Bathsheba: "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow."

Following the string of hyssop throughout scripture is a beautiful reminder that Jesus is God's Passover Lamb whose blood takes away our sins, cleansing us once and for all. God desires for us to be clean, pure, and holy, but due to our sinful nature, we fall short of that daily. But in His mercy, God steps in and provides a perfect sacrifice, the blood of the Lamb, to cleanse our guilt and wash us clean.

*Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. - Hebrews 10:19-23*



## REFLECTION

Turn David's words in Psalm 51 into a prayer today as you present yourself to the Lord, asking him to forgive you and create in you a pure heart.

Hebrews 1:1-3; 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; 7:15-28; 10:8-12,  
 Luke 1:31-33, Revelation 19:11-16; 21:5-6

## OUR PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

Jesus came to establish a new covenant where He holds the office of the ultimate prophet, priest, and king. As the ultimate prophet, Jesus clearly expresses God’s will for His people and makes the way to salvation known; as the ultimate priest, He gave Himself up as the sacrifice for our sins and continues to intercede on our behalf; as the ultimate king, He rules supreme over all humanity and conquers all God’s enemies. Understanding Jesus as prophet, priest, and king helps us know His redemptive work and how all the Old Testament prophets, priests, and kings point us toward Jesus. In each of these roles, Jesus surpasses the greatest Old Testament examples: he is a greater prophet than Moses, a greater priest than Aaron, and a greater king than David. The role of a prophet was to speak the Word of God. Not only did Jesus speak on behalf of the Father, but as John tells us, Jesus was the Word. He is the prophet that all other prophets were pointing us toward.

*In the past, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days, he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe - Hebrews 1:1-2*

The priests served as the temporary mediators between God and man. They offered sacrifices required under the law. Within that priesthood was a single High Priest who offered the sacrifice on the day of atonement that cleansed the people’s sins for an entire year. Jesus now holds the role of the Greatest High Priest by removing our sins forever. We can now access the Father directly through the name of Jesus, no longer needing a priest to meditate on our behalf.

*Because of this oath, Jesus has become the guarantor of a better covenant. Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. - Hebrews 7:22-24*

God never wanted Israel to have a human as king. God allowed His people to have what they asked for – to be like other nations – and Israel had to accept the consequences of these kings. God knew the dangers of men ruling over men. Prophecies paved the way for the restoration of the true King, God himself, in Christ Jesus, the Son of David. King Jesus holds all authority and is the King of Kings that will reign forever.

*The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end. - Luke 1:32-33*



### REFLECTION

What does it mean to you that Jesus now reigns as the ultimate prophet, priest and king?



Week 5, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we looked at Jesus' last words from John 19:28 - *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."* As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read John 19:28. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change how we see Him and how we live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

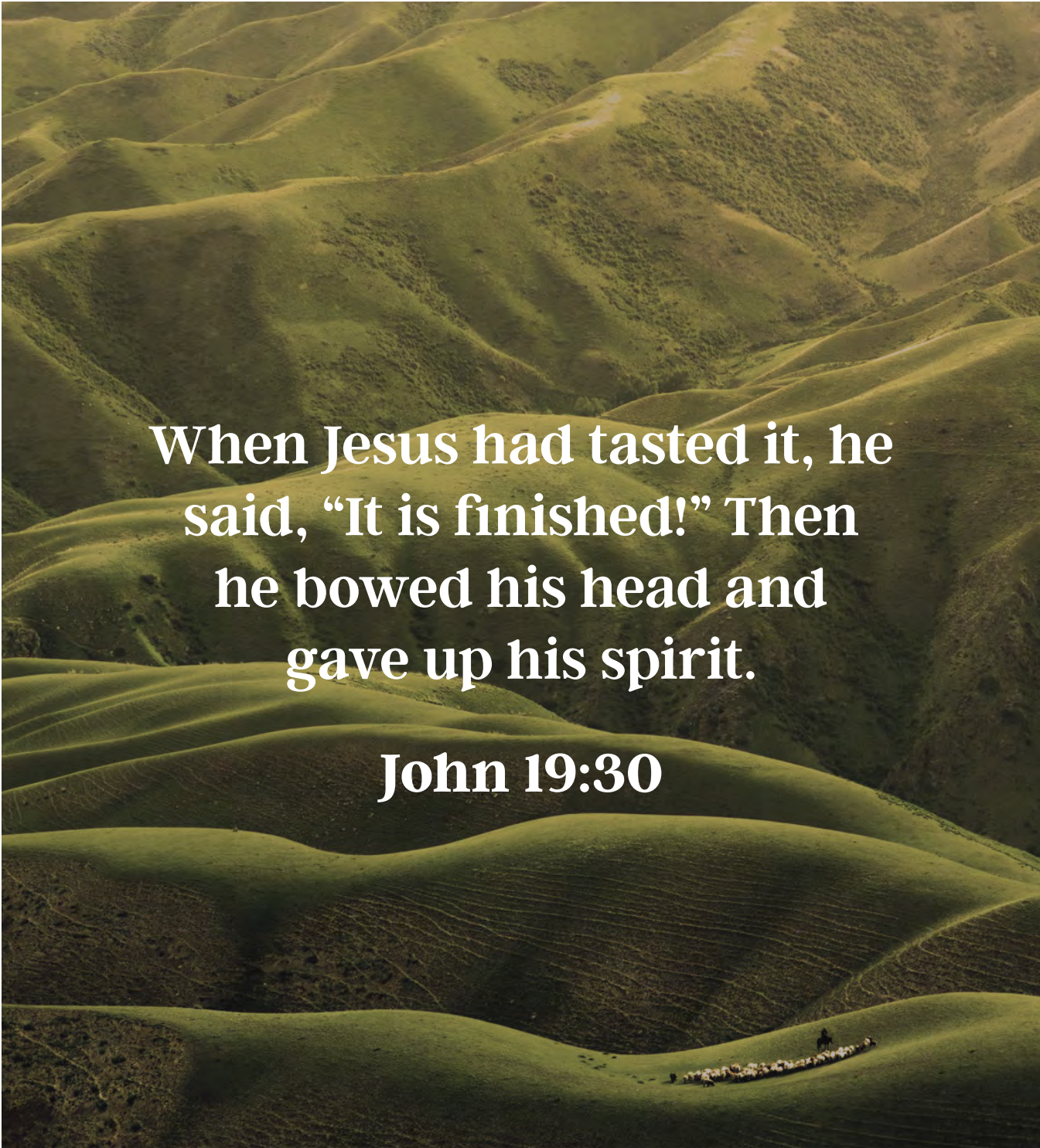
Week 5, Day 7

# Sunday

## Rest Day

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.





When Jesus had tasted it, he said, “It is finished!” Then he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

**John 19:30**

**LAST WORDS.**

**Week 6**

Week 6, Day 1

# Monday

**"It is finished!"**

**John 19:30**

John 19:30, 1 Corinthians 15:54-57

## THE CRY OF VICTORY

*"It is finished" is not a death gurgle. "It is finished" is not "I am done for." "It is finished" will not be, as we know from the tradition of the ordering of these words from the cross, the last words of Jesus. "It is finished" is a cry of victory. "It is finished" is the triumphant cry that what I came to do has been done. All is accomplished, completed, fulfilled work. The work that is finished, moreover, is the cross. He will be and is resurrected, but the resurrected One remains the One crucified." - Stanley Hauerwas - Cross-Shattered Christ*



### REFLECTION

Have you ever thought of these last words of Jesus as a victory cry? More specifically, have you ever thought of these last words of Jesus as your victory cry? The three words "It is finished" are a promise and confirmation that Jesus' life, torture, mockery, and crucifixion were not for nothing. It is a seal that His work of salvation is accomplished. It is a promise that we are heirs of His grace and sacrifice when we put our faith and lives in Him. Take a moment and write down these three words from John 19:30. Set a schedule to look at these words this morning, this afternoon, and this evening. Each time you look at them, thank God for what they mean for our lives.

John 19:30, John 1:1-5, Genesis 1:31-2:2

## THE CONSUMMATION OF CREATION

*"On the sixth day of creation "God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1:31). So on the seventh day "God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done" (Genesis 2:2). Accordingly the seventh day was hallowed. But God's work, the work of the Trinity, is consummated in Jesus's great declaration from the cross, "It is finished." His life, his death, his resurrection, as Irenaeus insisted, recapitulates creation, recapitulates God's covenant with Israel, uniting creation and redemption in Incarnation.*

*At the beginning of the Gospel of John we are told: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. - John 1:1-5*

*Creation has an end, creation is to be consummated, and the name of that end and consummation is Jesus." -Stanley Hauerwas Cross-Shattered Christ*



### REFLECTION

From the very beginning, God had a plan. God has always been at work to free and save His people. Christ upon the cross shouting "It is finished" is a declaration that has been working since creation. Everything in creation has been pointing towards Jesus since the beginning. Everything in creation continues to point towards Jesus' sacrifice and future return. Our lives are meant to be pointing toward this, too. Spend time reflecting on this day and seek to direct your life today towards the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

John 19:30, Colossians 1:24-27, 1 Corinthians 9:24-27,  
Hebrews 12:1-14

## FINISHED, BUT NOT OVER

A finish line is a relatively straightforward thing. In a race, whether biking, running a marathon, racing in a car, or swimming a distance, there is a destination that marks when the competition is complete. The competitors work, train, prepare, and execute to attempt to cross that finish line. After the work is done and the race has been won or completed, the work that has led to this moment is finally at an end. Pretty simple.

Scripture refers to life as a race. Paul talked about it this way: the author of Hebrews referred to it in this manner, and when we look at Jesus' final words on the cross, we are reminded of this image, too. Life is a race where everyone is seeking the finish line of the "purpose," "meaning," or "ultimate fulfillment" of life, but scripture is clear that the finish line is Christ, and the race is not our attempt to receive Him, but our attempt to keep our eyes on Him. When Jesus said, "It is finished," He declared the race won for all who call Him Father and Savior.

The race is finished, and we know we have victory in Jesus, but that does not mean that the work of the race is over. We still must point ourselves towards Jesus who crossed the finish line for us. We must train our hearts and minds in this life to walk towards Him, reflect Him, share Him, and trust in Him. The race is finished, but the work we must do in this already-won race of life is not over. Don't lose sight of the finish line. Keep heading daily toward it, toward Him.

*"It is finished.' But it is not over. God remains at work, making us, his creatures, divine." - Stanley Hauerwas - Cross-Shattered Christ*



## REFLECTION

For any race that is meant to be run, there is training involved. The race of life is the race of training the soul for an eternity with Jesus. Spend time today making a "training plan." Specifically, pray and assess your heart and life towards God. Ask yourself where you feel you fall short of keeping your life in line with Christ, and make a plan for how to keep your steps centered on Christ. Invite Him into those areas of weakness.

John 19:30, John 1:29-36, Hebrews 10:1-4

## BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD

*"There is no aspect of Christian faith more difficult for us to believe. It is in the nature of the human being to think that Christ's work could not possibly be finished, that we have to do more, we have to add to it, we have to earn it." -Fleming Rutledge The Seven Last Words from the Cross*

These three last words of Jesus are the hardest for us to believe because they are words said outside of our efforts, outside of our worthiness, and outside of our repayment. The gracious gift of Jesus' sacrifice is so nearly impossible to believe because there's nothing we can compare it to in this life. It's so radical, beautiful, and kind that we can't wrap our hearts or minds around it. The closest we can get to understanding it is to think of someone paying off a sizable financial debt that we couldn't pay or of someone taking our place for a crime that is worthy of death, but even still, these images fall short of what Jesus did for us.

The same was true of the Jewish people at this time. They were hardwired to believe that their sins could only be forgiven based on their ritualistic sacrifices to God. Goats, rams, bulls, and lambs were the offerings of forgiveness from God for hundreds of years. When Jesus came, He lived the perfect, spotless life and yet took on the torture, the sinful pains of separation from God, and mockery upon the cross. He became the sacrificial lamb of all sacrificial lambs. Never again would animal sacrifices or the work of atonement be necessary. When Jesus said, "It is finished," He declared that the impossible was now possible. He stated that freedom was here and had a name, Jesus. Behold the Lamb of God who has saved us from our sins and repaid the debts our lives never could.



### REFLECTION

It is so hard to believe you are forgiven. We know ourselves better than anyone else. Thankfully, there's another who actually knows us even better, Jesus, and in spite, actually, because of His deep knowledge and understanding of who we are, He has forgiven and saved us. Begin a practice today that might help you to trust that you are forgiven. Write down Jesus' last words, "It is finished," and follow that with writing, "He has forgiven me. I am set free." Try this practice when you struggle to remember or believe what He has done for you. End this time by thanking Him for this glorious gift.

Luke 23:34, Luke 23:43, John 19:26, Matthew 27:46, John 19:28, John 19:30

*"Finished." It was a Conqueror's cry; it was uttered with a loud voice. There is nothing of anguish about it, there is no wailing in it. It is the cry of One who has completed a tremendous labour..." - Charles Spurgeon Christ's Dying Word for His Church*

*"It is finished!" Jesus' final word (tetelestai in the ancient Greek) was the cry of a winner. Jesus had finished the eternal purpose of the cross. It stands today as a finished work, the foundation of all Christian peace and faith, paying in full the debt we righteously owed to God and making peace between God and man." - David Guzik Enduring Word Commentary*

*"Jesus died with the cry of the Victor on His lips. This is not the moan of the defeated, nor the sigh of patient resignation. It is the triumphant recognition that He has now fully accomplished the work that He came to do." - Leon Morris*

*"The verb teleo (teleo, 'to finish') was used in first and second centuries in the sense of 'fulfilling' or 'paying' a debt and often appeared in receipts. Jesus' statement 'It is finished' (tetelestai, tetelestai) could be interpreted as 'Paid in full.'" - Tommy Tenney*

*"The ugliness of his Crucifixion corresponds to the ugliness of the sin of the world. He has passed through his ordeal "out of bondage into freedom, out of sin into righteousness, out of death into life." It is finished. It is accomplished. It is enough. It is once- for all." - Fleming Rutledge - The Seven Last Words from the Cross*



## REFLECTION

Spend today re-reading Jesus' last words. Read these quotes from Christian pastors, preachers, commentators, and authors. Meditate on these reminders of what Jesus' last words mean. Ask God to help these words be imprinted on your heart.



Week 6, Day 6

# Saturday

## Reflection Day

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week we looked at Jesus' last words from John 19:30, "*It is finished*". As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read John 19:30. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change the way we see Him and live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

Week 6, Day 7

# Palm Sunday

## Rest Day

Luke 19:28-40

What is Palm Sunday? Traditionally, Palm Sunday is the Sunday before Easter Sunday when Christians remember and reflect upon Jesus' entry into Jerusalem, which marked His final week of life on earth. Palm Sunday is meant as a preparation for our hearts as we turn towards Holy Week, a time set aside to remember Jesus' final days, arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion, and ultimately His resurrection.

Palm Sunday kicks off the heaviness of Holy Week with a glimpse of the joy that comes from seeing Jesus for who He really is. Palm Sunday reminds our hearts that the story of the crucifixion and sacrifice of Jesus, although weighty on our hearts, begins and ends with a celebration. The King has entered the sacrificial chamber and is preparing to free the world with His life, yet not even the power of death can stop Him from His glorious return and resurrection.

This is what we remember and celebrate today on Palm Sunday: the King entering into His final and greatest battle, the battle for our souls. Spend time thanking Jesus today for His glorious entry into Jerusalem and ask Him to help turn your heart to worship Him daily as the King and Savior that He is.

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.



What is Holy Week?

# What is Holy Week?

Simply defined, Holy Week is the week that leads towards Easter. Holy Week is a time (a week) set aside to remember the torturous events that took place in order for our salvation in Jesus to be possible. Throughout Holy Week, we are invited to remember Jesus' last supper, His prayers to God the Father in the garden of Gethsemane, His arrest, trial, torture, crucifixion, death, and ultimate resurrection on Easter Sunday. It is a powerful, heavy, and spiritually impactful week of remembrance and reflection.

David Matthis, Executive Editor of *DesiringGod.org*, in his meditation guide for Holy Week, explains the why behind Holy Week like this,

*"In one sense, there's nothing special about "Holy Week." Just another sequence of eight days each spring—nothing is intrinsically holy about this Sunday to Sunday that moves around the calendar each year. We have no mandate from Jesus or his apostles to mark these days for particular observance. Marking Holy Week is not an obligation, but it is an opportunity. It is a chance to walk with the church, throughout time and through the world, as she walks with her Bridegroom through the most important week in the history of the world. It is a chance to focus our minds on, and seek to intensify our affections for, the most important and timeless realities."*

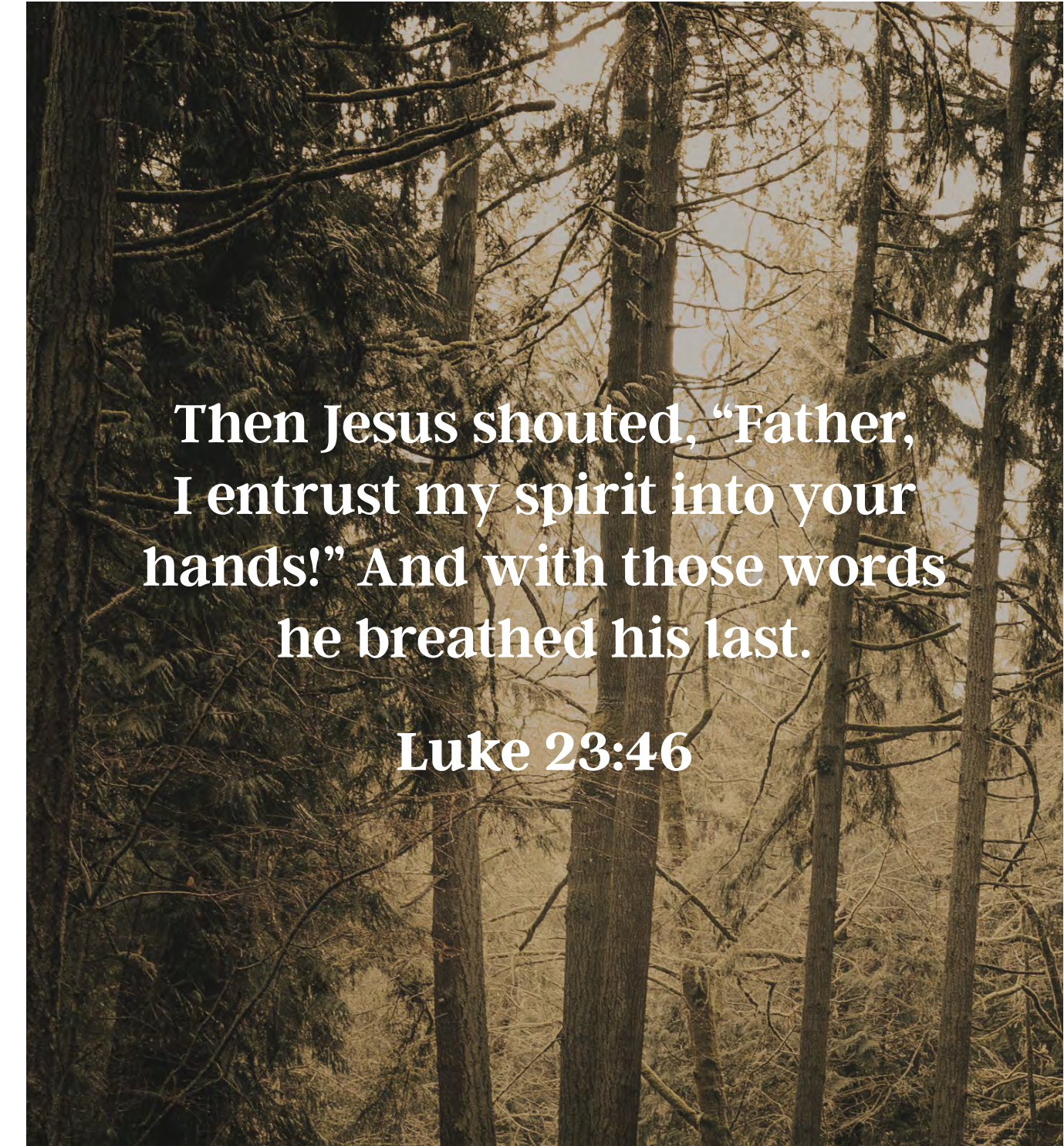
*While not mandating the observance, or even suggesting it, the New Testament does give us (indirect) reason, if we're looking for it. The final eight of Matthew's 28 chapters are given to this one week, along with the last six of Mark's sixteen and the final six of Luke's 24. Most significant, though, is John. Ten of the Gospel's 21 chapters—essentially half—deal with the final week of our Lord's life, his betrayal, his trials, his crucifixion, and his triumphant resurrection. Even Acts, which then narrates the life of the early church, returns to the events of Holy Week with frequency (see, for instance, Acts 1:15-19; 2:22-36; 3:11-26; 4:8-12, 24-28, among others).*

*Indeed, it could even be said that all the Old Testament anticipates this week, and the rest of the New Testament reflects it in theology and practical living." In the chaos of our increasingly fast-paced and hectic society, Holy Week is a reminder to pause and ponder, to carefully mark each day and not let this greatest of all weeks fly by us like every other." -David Matthis Your Sorrow Will Turn to Joy*

This week, it is our prayer that as we walk into the final week of our study of Jesus' Last Words, you would treat this week as it is: holy. Remember, read, and reflect on Jesus' sacrifice this week. Remember how He poured out for you that you may be free and safe in Him. Praise God this week for the gift of His Son. Remember what this week means for your eternity.

Let us walk in nearness to Jesus this Holy Week.





**Then Jesus shouted, “Father,  
I entrust my spirit into your  
hands!” And with those words  
he breathed his last.**

**Luke 23:46**



**LAST WORDS.**



**Week 7**

Week 7, Day 1

# Monday

**“Father, I entrust my spirit  
into your hands!”**

**Luke 23:46**

*Luke 23:44-46*

## THE FINAL STEP

Throughout the last six weeks we have taken time to deeply study and meditate upon the seven final words that Jesus shared upon the cross. On this Holy Week, we look to Jesus' final word. We look at the last words He uttered as He breathed His last. Before we unpack these words and their meaning, we need to understand the importance of His final words as a whole.

Hopefully, this study has shown you that Jesus' final words pointed to the work He was accomplishing on the cross, but also how those words and work should radically transform how we see Jesus and our lives around Him. Jesus' last words on the cross, "Father, I entrust my spirit into your hands!" are the words that seal His sacrifice. As He says these words, it says He breathed His last, meaning He gave His spirit. This was the final step. These were the words that ended our eternity of hopelessness and secured an eternity of righteousness, gloriousness, and joyfulness in the presence of Jesus.

This week, as we study these words and their meaning for us today, remember that the work of the cross has been completed, and we will one day go home to Him.



## REFLECTION

Take a moment and reflect or journal on what this study has meant for you. What is something you have learned? How has this study changed the way you see Jesus and His sacrifice? What do you plan to do with the lessons from this study?

Week 7, Day 2

# Tuesday

**“Father, I entrust my spirit  
into your hands!”**

**Luke 23:46**

Luke 23:46, Luke 2:41-49, Ephesians 4:6, Isaiah 64:8,  
Matthew 26:36-56

## FATHER

*“This word, Father: What can we say about it? Not everyone has had a father who showed forth the fatherly love and care which Jesus knew. Some would want to substitute “Mother.” But as we know from many Scripture references, the concept of a loving, protecting, nurturing Father embraces the image of a mother also. We call God “Father” because Jesus did, and I confess that is enough for me. It means that we are related to God as a beloved child, one for whose welfare the parent pours himself out day by day. We know virtually nothing of Saint Joseph, but he must have given the young boy Jesus some idea of what a strong, tender father was like.*

*Through his early experience of father and mother, the child Jesus was enabled to put his trust in the One Father in heaven – the Father whom he would know so well at the age of twelve that he would be able precociously to say, “Did you not know that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49) – as indeed he was, all the way to the final, dreadful, unthinkable moment, still trusting: Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. A perfect life lived, a terrible death died, all for the sake of bringing you and me into the near presence of that same Father forever, with him.” - Fleming Rutledge The Seven Last Words from the Cross*



## REFLECTION

There’s power in seeing that despite all Jesus went through; He always looked at God as His Father. In life, we tend to become naturally distracted or distant towards God. Jesus never did this, even in the face of His death. In the end, Jesus died the way He lived, with His eyes turned toward God. The image of God our Father should invoke warmth and comfort. Take time this morning to pray to your heavenly Father. Specifically, ask Him to pour His comfort and warm presence on you and to bring you closer to Him today. Ask Him to help you see Him as your Father.

**“Father, I entrust my spirit  
into your hands!”**

**Luke 23:46**

Luke 23:46, Genesis 2:7, Romans 12:2, Romans 14:8,  
Ecclesiastes 12:7, Matthew 26:57-68, Matthew 27:11-26

## LIFE AND DEATH

*“...in this last saying from the Cross, Luke is teaching us how to die and how to live. Because we, by faith, are assimilated to Christ in his death, we also are assimilated to him in his life beyond death. In his suffering we find our redemption. In his abandonment we find our acceptance. In his dereliction we find our salvation. And at last we are able to say even in the midst of doubt and perplexity, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit, even as the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ said.” - Fleming Rutledge The Seven Last Words from the Cross*

Jesus’ final words reflect a summation of life. Naturally, it leads us to reflect on Jesus’ life that was poured out as a sacrifice. We see that most clearly in His expression of these final words, but it also leads us to reflect on our own trajectory. We live, and we die. This is no mystery or surprise to us. It’s the flow of every living thing’s time on earth, but what we do with our life and how we walk into the mystery of death is what allows us to reflect Christ or repel Him. Jesus lived His life in consistent reflection and relationship with the Father. Even in His final moment, He prays to the Father.

There’s so much in life we can’t control, including our death, but what we can control is what we do with our lives and how we embrace the inevitable death that lies before us as the final act of leading us back to Christ. I know this is a difficult thing to think about. It causes great anxiety for us to think about our death, but Christ’s final words here are a reminder that, just as in life, Christ walks with us through the fear that comes with death. The question is: are we willing and ready to commend our entire lives over to Christ in order to feel this presence daily?



## REFLECTION

*The Book of Common Prayer* has been a guide for prayer, liturgy, and church structuring for many, many years. In one part of the book, there is a prayer to be read at burial services. It has been read countless times at graveside funeral services and is known by many. It also perfectly sums up the hope of our lives and the future awaiting us at our deaths. We adjusted the prayer to read from a first-person perspective. Read this prayer over your own life to encourage you as you walk towards Jesus until the end.

*For as much as it hath pleased Almighty God of his great mercy to take unto himself my soul, may my body be committed to the ground; earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust; in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall change my vile body, that it may be like unto his glorious body, according to the mighty working, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself.*



Week 7, Day 4

# Maunday Thursday

**“Father, I entrust my spirit  
into your hands!”**

**Luke 23:46**

*Luke 23:46, Matthew 26:26-29, 26:36-39, Colossians 2:13-15, John 5:30; 8:28-29*

## **SWEET COMMUNION**

With Jesus’ last words, He communicates a sweet intimacy and communion with His Father. Our Heavenly Father, who spared His people at the first Passover, is now preparing to spare His people again by sacrificing His Son as our Passover Lamb. Scholars believe Maundy Thursday was the day Jesus celebrated His final Passover with His disciples. Jesus led His disciples in the first act of communion, where He symbolizes His death and resurrection through the bread and wine of the Passover Meal. Still celebrated today as a part of many church traditions, communion represents the broken body of Christ and the blood that was shed for us. During this Passover meal, we see Jesus washing His disciples’ feet. After showing this example of humility, love, and service, Jesus commanded His disciples to go and serve likewise. He was pointing them towards a new kind of Passover; in addition to remembering the redemption of their forefathers in Egypt and the lamb’s blood on the doorpost allowing the angel of death “to pass over,” they were now to remember His broken body and shed blood. In Christ’s death, death itself is not just avoided; the power of sin and death is permanently defeated. After the meal, the disciples accompanied Jesus to the Garden at Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in agony. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.”



## **REFLECTION**

Throughout His entire life, we see Jesus continue to commune personally with His Father. What an example of what our communion with the Father can look like. Jesus was driven by a deep intimacy with the Father. If we wish to understand what motivated and guided Jesus daily, we must examine the intimate relationship He fostered with His heavenly Father. Jesus was listening to the Father to know what He was supposed to do and what He was supposed to say. Reflect on the passages from the book of John and what this means for your relationship with the Father.

# What is Good Friday?

Often we wonder why the day of Jesus' crucifixion is called "Good Friday", Isaiah 53:5 gives us an indication of why it is good:

*"But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed."*

Eugene Peterson paraphrases Isaiah 53 in this way:

*The servant grew up before God—a scrawny seedling, a scrubby plant in a parched field. There was nothing attractive about him, nothing to cause us to take a second look. He was looked down on and passed over, a man who suffered, who knew pain firsthand. One look at him and people turned away. We looked down on him, thought he was scum. But the fact is, it was our pains he carried—our disfigurements, all the things wrong with us. We thought he brought it on himself, that God was punishing him for his own failures. But it was our sins that did that to him, that ripped and tore and crushed him—our sins! He took the punishment, and that made us whole. Through his bruises we get healed. We're all like sheep who've wandered off and gotten lost. We've all done our own thing, gone our own way. And God has piled all our sins, everything we've done wrong, on him, on him.*

HE was beaten, so WE could be whole. HE was whipped, so WE could be healed... that is good news!

May we spend today reflecting not only on the good news, but also grieving the weight of our sin and the suffering it caused our Savior. May we spend today reflecting again on these seven words from the cross, soaking in all their meaning and all we have learned in our time together.

**Luke 23:34** - *And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*

**Luke 23:43** - *And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise."*

**John 19:26-27** - *When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!"*

**Matthew 27:46** - *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*

**John 19:28** - *After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), "I thirst."*

**John 19:30** - *When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished."*

**Luke 23:46** - *Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit!" And having said this he breathed his last.*

**We hope you make plans to join us for our Good Friday service at Grace today, it is an intimate come-and-go time for your own personal reflection.**

Week 7, Day 5

# Good Friday

**“Father, I entrust my spirit  
into your hands!”**

**Luke 23:46**

Choose one Bible account or read them all: Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, John 19

## THE ULTIMATE ACT OF LOVE

Following Jesus’ betrayal, arrest, desertion, false trials, denial, condemnation, beatings and mockery, Jesus was required to carry his cross to “the place of the skull”, where he was crucified with two other prisoners. Jesus’ body was placed in the tomb before 6:00 p.m. Friday evening, when the Sabbath began and all work stopped.

Jesus volunteered for His sacrifice. And He didn’t face the pain of the cross unknowingly. Why would He willingly suffer this fate? Because He loves us. He feels compassion for us. Instead of staying away from us, He runs toward us, embraces us, and pays the cost of our sins – even though it meant deep pain for Him. Today, reflect on how much worth you have in God’s eyes. So much worth that He endured the cross, with joy, so that you could be forgiven, known, and loved.



Today is an ideal time for personal reflection to silently and prayerfully contemplate Jesus’ death and resurrection.

*Father, today I celebrate the life I live in your freedom. Because of the sacrifice of your Son and because of the gift of His life, I can walk this earth knowing that I am fully known and accepted by you. Let my celebration of this life be something worth talking to others about in the days to come. Amen.*

Week 7, Day 6

# Saturday

## His Burial

Matthew 27:50-61, Luke 23:44-56

### REFLECTION NOTES AND QUESTIONS

This week, we walked through Holy Week by looking at Jesus' last words from Luke 23:46, "*Father, into your hands, I commit my spirit!*". As we wrap up this week's study, go back and read Luke 23:46. Reflect on these words that Jesus spoke. Reflect on what they mean about His character, His work on the cross, and how it should change the way we see Him and live. Reflect/journal your thoughts on this or these following prompts:

- Write down what you learned about who God is this week.
- What is something you looked at this week that you want to receive from God in greater measure? Why?
- How can you begin to posture your life to receive more from Him?

Week 7, Day 7

# Easter

## Sunday

Luke 24

Use today to rest, pray, and catch up on any of this week's readings you may have missed. Use today as a preparation for your heart toward the next week's study of God and His word.

# What Now?

As we have journeyed through these last seven words of Jesus together, we hope your heart feels closer to Jesus and to the heart of your Heavenly Father who laid out this beautiful plan of redemption from the very beginning.

Encyclopedia of the Bible says this:

*Of all the ironies of the cross that bridge the centuries, none is greater than the idea that eternal life for human beings springs out of Jesus' death. By offering up his Son, God is able to make sons and daughters of all who respond to this work. Therefore, we must believe what God has done through Christ at the cross and respond to it with a life that honors God.*

**So as we move forward let's set our hearts on Romans 12:1-2:**

*And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*

Father, today may we offer ourselves up as a living and holy sacrifice acceptable in your eyes. Because of the sacrifice of your Son and because of the gift of His life, we can walk this earth knowing that we are fully known and accepted by you. Let everything we do and say bring honor and glory to You.

**Amen.**



GRACE  
COMMUNITY  
CHURCH