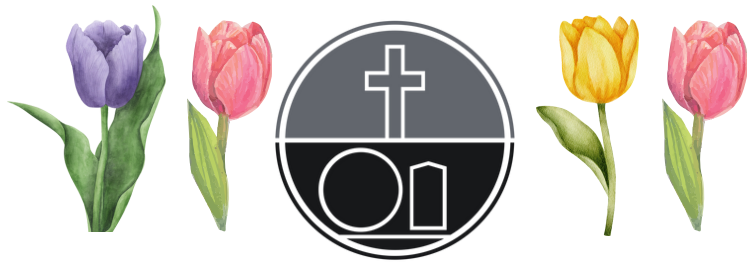


PROMISES MADE,
PROMISES KEPT:

AN **EASTER**

WEEK DEVOTIONAL



BEREA BIBLE CHURCH

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Introduction

We live in a world where promises often fall apart—commitments unravel, and we're left longing for something, or someone, we can truly count on. Yet, in this uncertainty, God's faithfulness stands like a light in the darkness. Across Scripture's pages, God makes 7,487 promises to us, and not one has ever failed. From the first light of creation to the dawn of the empty tomb, every word He speaks holds firm. This Easter devotional is our invitation to you to walk together through "Holy Week," tracing some of the greatest promises ever made, fulfilled in Jesus' journey to the cross and His triumph in resurrection.

Starting with Palm Sunday and ending on Easter Sunday, this eight-day study follows Jesus step-by-step to the empty tomb. Each day, we'll pause at a key moment from His final week, with two Scriptures—one from the Old Testament declaring God's promise, and one from the New Testament showing how Jesus brings its fulfillment. You'll find a commentary to deepen your understanding, reflection questions for all ages to spark discussion or journaling, and hands-on activities to make the story real—especially for our kids, who remember so much when they experience it! We've kept the supplies simple (listed on the next page), mostly things you already have at home. And to lift our hearts, we've included hymns and contemporary songs for worship—easy to find on YouTube or Spotify.

Here's how to use this devotional as a family or on your own: Each day offers a simple rhythm. Begin with the Scripture—read it aloud together or quietly to yourself. Then, dive into the Commentary to see how God's promises unfold in Jesus and speak to us today. Use the Discussion Questions to talk or reflect—pick ones that fit, whether for little ones, teens, or adults. Try one of the Activities to bring the story to life (most will take just 5-15 minutes). Wrap up with a Hymn or Contemporary Song to worship—sing along or just listen. Set aside 20-30 minutes, maybe over coffee, after supper, or before bed, but even 10 minutes works if that's what you've got! Join us for Easter week services when you can (check the "Church Connection" each day) or use this at home. Don't have every supply? Swap in what's handy: paper for fabric, a crayon for a marker. Fasting on Day 4 means skipping meals to focus on Jesus—start small if it's new. This isn't about doing it perfectly; it's about meeting Jesus together. By Easter, we pray you'll see how God's Word changes everything.

This is for all of us at Berea—families, singles, kids—to share. Gather around the table or in a cozy corner, read aloud, laugh over the crafts, and let the questions spark wonder and wisdom. The palm branches, prayer stones, and "Sunrise Shout" will make these truths stick. In a world of shaky ground, Jesus stands as our King who saves, our Sacrifice who forgives, and our risen Lord who brings new life. As you walk this week, may you find strength in His unshakable Word, hope in His finished work, and joy in the empty tomb that proves He keeps every promise—every single one. We're praying for you, Berea family, as we journey to Easter together.

Materials Needed for the Week

Gather these items ahead of time to enjoy the activities each day. Most are common household items. Substitutions are welcome—use what you have!

- Paper Supplies: Green construction paper (or any paper), plain paper, small slips of paper, strips of paper (any color)
- Writing Tools: Pens, markers, crayons, black marker
- Craft Basics: Scissors, tape, glue, stapler
- Household Items: Sticks (e.g., pencils or straws), small stones (or paper scraps), a small bowl or trash bin, a small box or cup, cloth or tissue, a stone or coin, a jar or container, red ribbon or yarn, crackers or bread, juice
- Optional Fun: Noisemakers (e.g., bells, pots and spoons), watercolors, two candles (or flashlights) with matches/lighter, small treats (e.g., jellybeans), a small figure (e.g., toy or paper cutout)

Day 1: Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025

Theme: The Promise of a King

Old Testament Scripture: Zechariah 9:9 (ESV)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 21:1-11 (ESV)

Most of the crowd spread their cloaks on the road, and others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. And the crowds that went before him and that followed him were shouting, 'Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!' And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, "Who is this?" And the crowds said, "This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee."

Commentary/Application:

Centuries before Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a colt, God spoke through the prophet Zechariah: a King would come, righteous and bearing salvation, a word that means rescue from sin and a promise of peace with God forever. This king would be humble, riding a donkey rather than a warhorse. This King wasn't going to be the conquering warrior Israel might have imagined to overthrow the Roman oppressors; He was to be a King of peace, fulfilling a divine plan laid out in the Old Testament.

On Palm Sunday, that promise breaks into reality. Jesus enters Jerusalem, and the crowds respond with cloaks and branches—acts reserved for royalty in ancient times—shouting "Hosanna," a cry from Psalm 118:25 meaning "save us now." They call Him "Son of David," a special title for the Messiah—the leader God promised long ago to save His people and make everything right. The city buzzes with the question, "Who is this?"—a mix of awe and confusion, for they see the promise unfolding but don't yet grasp what it all means.

This moment is no accident. Matthew ties it directly to Zechariah 9:9, showing God's faithfulness to His Word. A donkey is a symbol of humility, which contrasts with the pomp of earthly kings, revealing Jesus' mission: not to claim a throne of power, but to offer salvation through sacrifice. The excitement of the crowd is real, yet fleeting—within days, these same voices would demand His death. That shift proves the depth of God's promise: this King's triumph isn't about earthly glory or immediate deliverance from Rome, but about a kingdom that endures through the cross. Yesterday, the world waited; today, the King arrives, setting in motion a week where every step fulfills what God swore long ago. Tomorrow, He'll uphold another promise by cleansing what's holy.

What does this mean for us? It's a call to trust God's promises, even when they don't look like we expect. Jesus didn't ride in with a sword, but with a love that saves. Today, we're invited to welcome Him as King—not just with shouts, but with lives laid down like those cloaks on the road. Reflect on His humility and righteousness, and let it shape how you honor Him. His arrival proves God keeps His word, and that assurance can anchor us through every uncertainty. Take time to praise Him, declaring "Hosanna" in your own way, and live as subjects of this King whose reign brings eternal peace.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 11:7-11; Luke 19:35-40; John 12:12-19; Psalm 118:25-26

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. What promise did God make about a king in Zechariah? How did Jesus keep it?
2. Why do you think the people shouted "Hosanna" when they saw Jesus?
3. How can we cheer for Jesus as our King today?

For Teens/Adults:

1. How does Zechariah's promise of a humble king match what you see in Jesus?
2. What does it mean to you that God kept His promise with a King who saves?
3. How can we live like Jesus is our King every day?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. The crowd welcomed Jesus with joy yet soon turned. How do we stay faithful to Him beyond fleeting emotions?
2. Zechariah's king brings "salvation"—what does that word mean in your life right now?
3. How has God's faithfulness to His promises, like this one, changed the way you trust Him?

Activities:

Palm Branch Craft

- Materials: Green construction paper (or any paper), scissors, tape or glue, markers.
- Instructions: Cut out palm leaf shapes from paper (or draw them if you don't have green paper). Write "Hosanna!" or a short prayer on each leaf. Tape or glue them to a stick (like a pencil or straw) to make a "branch." Wave them together, shouting "Hosanna!" to welcome Jesus.

Cloak Road

- Materials: Paper, markers, or old fabric scraps.
- Instructions: Lay out a "road" with paper or fabric strips on the floor. Each person decorates a piece with a praise word (e.g., "Holy," "Love") like the crowd's cloaks. Walk the road together, saying, "Hosanna to our King!" (Ties directly to Matthew 21's cloaks on the road.)

Hymn:

"Hosanna, Loud Hosanna"

Contemporary Songs:

"King of Kings" by Hillsong Worship
"This Is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham
"Behold Our God" by Sovereign Grace Music

Church Connection: Today, join us for our Palm Sunday service as we celebrate Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem—or wave your palm branches at home to welcome Him as King!

Day 2: Monday, April 14, 2025

Theme: The Promise of a Holy Place

Old Testament Scripture: Isaiah 56:7 (ESV)

These I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 21:12-17 (ESV)

And Jesus entered the temple and drove out all who sold and bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. He said to them, "It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you have made it a den of robbers."

Commentary/Application:

God's promises continue in Isaiah 56:7: His house would be a sanctuary of prayer, a place where all people—Jew and Gentile alike—could meet Him, their offerings accepted, their hearts made joyful. The temple in Jerusalem was meant to show that vision, a place of holiness amidst a broken world. But by the time Jesus steps into it, it's a shadow of that promise. The outer courts, intended for foreigners to pray, are clogged with moneychangers and pigeon-sellers turning sacred space into a marketplace. The animals they sold were for sacrifices—offerings to say sorry to God—but Jesus knew He'd soon be the one true gift to fix everything.

Jesus' response is fierce and immediate: He drives them out, overturning tables with a zeal that echoes His Father's heart. Quoting Isaiah, He declares, "My house shall be called a house of prayer," and adds Jeremiah 7:11's rebuke, "but you have made it a den of robbers." Jesus called it a 'den of robbers'—like a hideout for thieves—because people were using God's space for selfish gain instead of worship. This isn't just a temple cleaning; it's a fulfillment, a reclaiming of God's vow. The animals sold were for sacrifices, but Jesus' actions hint at a deeper promise: He Himself will become the final offering, making the old system obsolete (Hebrews 10:10). The temple's purpose—to connect us to God—finds its ultimate expression in Him, the living temple (John 2:19-21). Earlier that day, Jesus cursed a fig tree that bore no fruit (Mark 11:12-14), a vivid picture of what the temple had become—showy but empty. Just as God promised a holy place in Isaiah, Jesus acts to restore true worship, judging what's false and pointing to Himself as the real connection to God.

Yesterday, He entered as King; today, He purifies as Priest, ensuring God's house reflects its holy calling. This sets the stage for tomorrow, when He'll embody another promise through suffering. For us, it's a mirror: what's cluttering our lives, crowding out prayer? Jesus' boldness challenges us to examine our hearts—those temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19)—and clear space for God. His fulfillment of Isaiah's promise isn't just history; it's personal. He keeps God's Word by making us holy too, inviting all into His presence. Today, swap distraction for devotion—set aside time, maybe a quiet corner, and let His desire for holiness inspire you to live as a house of prayer, trusting the God who never forgets His pledges.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46; John 2:13-17; Jeremiah 7:8-11; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. Why do you think Jesus was upset about what people were doing in the temple?
2. Why do you think Jesus wanted the temple to be a place of prayer?
3. How can we keep our hearts "clean" for Jesus?

For Teens/Adults:

1. How can we make our lives a "house of prayer" instead of a place distracted by other things?
2. Why do you think Jesus cared so much about the temple being used the right way?
3. What "tables" in your life might Jesus want to overturn to bring you closer to Him?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. Jesus acted boldly to protect what was holy. Where do you see a need for boldness in your faith today?
2. How does the promise of a "house of prayer for all peoples" shape your view of who God welcomes?
3. Reflect on a time when God "cleaned out" something in your heart—what did you learn?

Activity:

Heart Cleaning Challenge

- Materials: Paper, pens, a small bowl or trash bin.
- Instructions: Each person writes down or draws one "distraction" or "clutter" in their life (too much screen time, worry) on a slip of paper—something they want Jesus to "clean out." Share it (optional), then tear it up and throw it in the trash as a symbol of giving it to Him.

Hymns:

"Take Time to Be Holy"

"Holy, Holy, Holy! Lord God Almighty"

"I Need Thee Every Hour"

Contemporary Songs:

"Only a Holy God" by CityLight

"Build My Life" by Pat Barrett

"Holy Spirit" by Francesca Battistelli

"Open the Eyes of My Heart" by Paul Baloche

Church Connection: Take a moment today to reflect on Jesus' desire for a pure, prayerful space in your heart, preparing for Wednesday's prayer service. Pray that our church might be a house of prayer.

Day 3: Tuesday, April 15, 2025

Theme: The Promise of a Suffering Servant

Old Testament Scripture: Isaiah 53:4-5 (ESV)

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 26:36-46 (ESV)

"Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here, while I go over there and pray.' And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.' And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, 'My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.'"

Commentary/Application:

Sin is anything we think, say, do, or don't do that displeases God. Isaiah 53 unveils an amazing promise: a Servant who'd take our griefs, carry our sorrows, and be pierced for our sins. This Servant wasn't a triumphant figure but one "stricken" and "crushed," bearing the weight of humanity's rebellion. Fast forward to Gethsemane, and Jesus steps into that role with humanity. "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death," He confesses, the Greek word for "sorrowful" painting a picture of anguish so deep it threatens to overwhelm. He asks His disciples to "watch" with Him—to stay vigilant—but they sleep, leaving Him alone to face the "cup" of God's wrath (Isaiah 51:17). The 'cup' Jesus prayed about was like a symbol of God's anger at sin—a tough thing He'd take on so we wouldn't have to. Falling on His face, He prays, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." That surrender fulfills Isaiah's vision: the Servant chooses our redemption over His own relief.

Hebrews 5:7 tells us His prayers were heard, yet the cross remained His path—proof that God's promise wasn't about ease, but about love. During this time, the religious leaders huddled in secret, plotting His death (Matthew 26:1-5). Psalm 2:2 had foretold it: 'The kings of the earth set themselves... against the Lord and against His Anointed.' Their plan, sparked by His bold actions, unknowingly pushes God's promise forward—Judas would soon seal it with a kiss. Yesterday, He cleansed the temple to honor God's holiness; today, He prepares to cleanse us, taking our punishment. Tomorrow, betrayal will test this resolve, but here, in the garden's shadows, Jesus locks in the promise.

His sorrow shows He's like us—feeling fear, wrestling with pain—yet His obedience sets Him apart, securing our salvation. By choosing God's plan, He won our redemption—a rescue that sets us free from sin and brings us back to God.

For us, Gethsemane is an example of lament: when life crushes us, we can pray as He did, trusting God's will over our own. Write down a burden and offer it up

—"Your will, not mine"—or share it with a friend, mirroring Jesus' call for support. God promised a Suffering Servant, and Jesus kept it, proving that even in darkness, His faithfulness shines. Let that truth steady you today, as you lean into the One who bore your sorrows so you wouldn't have to.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46; John 18:1; Hebrews 5:7-9; Isaiah 51:17-22

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. What did Isaiah say about someone taking our sorrows? How did Jesus do that?
2. Jesus prayed when He was sad. What do you do when you feel scared or upset?
3. Why do you think Jesus wanted His friends nearby while He prayed?

For Teens/Adults:

1. Why do you think Jesus prayed for God's will instead of His own desires?
2. How can we pray like Jesus when we're facing something hard?
3. What does it mean to "watch" (or stay vigilant) with Jesus in our everyday lives today?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. Jesus faced deep sorrow yet trusted God. How has prayer carried you through hard times?
2. What "cup" have you asked God to take away, and how did you find peace in His will?
3. How does Jesus' honesty about His sorrow encourage you in your own prayers?

Activities:

Prayer Stones

- Materials: Small stones or paper scraps, markers, pens, or paint.
- Instructions: Gather some stones or scraps of paper that are large enough to write on. Each family member writes a prayer (e.g., "God's will be done" or a personal need) on the stone or paper. Leave them out somewhere in your house as a reminder to pray regularly.

Prayer Walk

- Materials: None required (optional: a small object like a stone to hold).
- Instructions: Take a short walk (outside or around your home). As you go, stop three times: 1) Say something you're worried about, 2) Ask God for His will, 3) Thank Him for listening. If solo, whisper your prayers quietly to Jesus as you walk.

Hymns:

"In the Garden"
"What a Friend We Have in Jesus"
"Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus"
"Sweet Hour of Prayer"

Contemporary Songs:

"Goodness of God" by Bethel Music
"The Lord's Prayer" by Hillsong Worship
"Yet Not I But Through Christ in Me" by CityAlight

Church Connection: Spend time today praying like Jesus in Gethsemane, seeking God's will—join us tomorrow night at 6:30 PM for our prayer service to do this together!

Day 4: Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Theme: The Promise of Betrayal

Old Testament Scripture: Psalm 41:9 (ESV)

Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 26:47-56 (ESV)

"While he was still speaking, Judas came, one of the twelve, and with him a great crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the elders of the people. Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'The one I will kiss is the man; seize him.' And he came up to Jesus at once and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' And he kissed him. Jesus said to him, 'Friend, do what you came to do.'"

Commentary/Application:

Psalm 41:9 is like a gut punch—a promise of betrayal from a trusted friend, someone who shared bread, a symbol of intimacy. David wrote the Psalm from his own pain, but it points forward to Jesus. Judas, one of the twelve who walked with Jesus for years, steps forward in Gethsemane with a crowd armed with swords and clubs. His sign? A kiss—an act of affection twisted into treachery. "Greetings, Rabbi!" he says, which means "teacher"—a respectful word that hid his sneaky plan, but Jesus sees through it, responding, "Friend, do what you came to do." That word "friend" isn't sarcasm; it's grace, echoing the psalm's heartbreak with a love that doesn't flinch. John 13:27 reveals Satan's role, yet Jesus remains sovereign, unshaken as the group closes in.

This betrayal wasn't a derailment—it was promised, woven into God's plan. Days earlier, in Bethany, Mary anointed Jesus with costly perfume (John 12:1-8), a prophetic act for His burial. Jesus defended her, saying, "She has done it to prepare me for burial," while Judas grumbled—his heart already turning. Psalm 41:9 foresaw it, and Jesus fulfills it, proving even human failure serves divine purpose.

Yesterday, He surrendered to God's will in prayer; today, that trust holds as Judas' kiss seals His fate. The sting is real—imagine Jesus' ache, loving a friend who'd sell Him for thirty coins (Zechariah 11:12-13 ties this to another prophecy). Yet, His response is stunning: peace amid chaos, grace amid hurt.

For us, it's a promise kept in the hardest way—God uses even betrayal to save us. When we're let down, we can look to Jesus, who faced the worst and still loved. Today, pray for someone who's hurt you, or choose faithfulness when tempted to break trust. God's Word stood firm through Judas' act, and it stands firm for us, turning brokenness into redemption. Let's reflect on His loyalty, resting in the One who keeps every promise, even through the dark.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 14:43-46; Luke 22:47-48; John 13:18-30; Zechariah 11:12-13; Psalm 55:12-14

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. What did the Psalm say about a friend turning away? How did Judas do that?
2. How would you feel if a friend tricked you like Judas did to Jesus?
3. What can we do to show Jesus we're His true friends?

For Teens/Adults:

1. Jesus called Judas "friend" even in betrayal. What does this tell us about forgiveness?
2. Why do you think Judas chose to betray Jesus—what might have been in his heart?
3. How can we stay faithful to Jesus when we're tempted to turn away?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. Have you ever felt betrayed? How does Jesus' response challenge or comfort you? What should be our response?
2. Jesus knew Judas would betray Him yet loved him. How does this shape your view of loving others?
3. Reflect on a time you needed to forgive someone—how did God help you through it?

Activities:

Fasting Promise Card

- Materials: Paper, markers or pens.
- Instructions: As you begin the fast today at 6:30 PM, make a small card with a promise to focus on Jesus (e.g., "I'll pray instead of eating tonight"). Decorate it simply and keep it in your pocket or prayer space as a reminder.

Candle of Trust

- Materials: Two candles (or flashlights) and matches/lighter.
- Instructions: Light two candles in a dim room. Talk about how Jesus stayed loving even when betrayed. Each person shares a time they felt let down by someone. Then, blow out one candle together, symbolizing how trust can fade—but say, "Jesus' light never goes out," looking at the second candle to show His faithfulness.

Hymns:

"Go to Dark Gethsemane"
"O Love That Wilt Not Let Me Go"
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"

Contemporary Songs:

"How Deep the Father's Love for Us" by Stuart Townend
"Christ is Mine Forevermore" by CityAlight
"Jesus Paid It All" by Kristian Stanfill
"Even If" by MercyMe

Church Connection: Join us tonight at 6:30 PM for our prayer service at the Resurrection Garden as we seek God's strength together and begin our church-wide fast to remember Jesus' sacrifice as we prepare for tomorrow's communion service. If you cannot attend tonight, please fast with us, beginning at 6:30 PM!

Day 5: Thursday, April 17, 2025

Theme: The Promise of a New Covenant

Old Testament Scripture: Jeremiah 31:31-33 (ESV)

Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts...

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 26:26-29 (ESV)

"Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Commentary/Application:

In Jeremiah 31, God promises a huge shift: a new covenant (another word for promise), not etched on stone like the old, but written on hearts—a bond of intimacy and forgiveness. The old covenant found in the Mosaic Covenant, with its sacrifices and laws, pointed to something greater, but it couldn't erase sin's stain. Jesus at the Last Supper, takes bread and a cup, transforming a Passover meal into a divine declaration—a symbol of this new covenant. "This is my body," He says, breaking it; "this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." That phrase "poured out for many" echoes Isaiah 53:12, tying this moment to the Suffering Servant's sacrifice. Here, Jesus fulfills Jeremiah's promise, sealing it with His own life. Unlike the blood of bulls sprinkled in Exodus 24:8, His blood doesn't just cover—it cleanses, once for all (Hebrews 9:12).

In Judas' absence, Jesus gathers His remaining disciples, offering Himself as the covenant's cornerstone. Tomorrow, the cross will complete it, but here, He invites us into the promise. Paul later urges us to remember this act (1 Corinthians 11:23-25), linking us across time to that upper room. It's not just a meal—it's a promise kept, a new relationship with God where forgiveness isn't earned but received. As we fast today, feel the weight of that gift: His body broken, His blood shed, for you. Before communion tonight, name a sin and let it go—He's wiped it clean. This promise reshapes us—uniting us to Him and each other, calling us to live gratefully as covenant people. God swore a new way, and Jesus delivered it, proving His Word is unbreakable. Let that truth sink in, and let it spill out in how you love others today.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-25; Exodus 24:6-8; Hebrews 8:8-13

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. Why do you think Jesus shared bread and the cup with His friends?
2. What do we share with people we love, like Jesus did?
3. How does eating together make you feel closer to someone?

For Teens/Adults:

1. How does taking communion remind us of Jesus' love and forgiveness?
2. Why do you think Jesus called it a "new covenant"? What's new about it?
3. How can we live out this new covenant in our daily choices?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. What does the "new covenant" mean to you personally as you reflect on your life with Jesus?
2. How has communion deepened your connection to Christ over the years?
3. Jesus gave thanks before giving the bread and cup—what are you thankful for in His sacrifice?

Activities:

Covenant Chain

- Materials: Strips of paper (any color), pens, tape or stapler.
- Instructions: Make a paper chain. On each strip, write one word or phrase about what Jesus' sacrifice means to you (e.g., "love," "forgiveness," "new start"). Focus on the promises God gives to us. Write those on the chain links too! Link the strips into a chain by taping or stapling them together. Hang it somewhere visible (like over a doorway). Add to it during the week if you want!

Crackers and Juice

- Materials: Crackers or bread and juice.
- Instructions: Sit down together as a family and share your snack. Talk about why we have communion at church and what the elements represent.

Heart Stamp

- Materials: Paper, red marker/paint, fingers.
- Instructions: Dip a finger in red paint (or use a marker) to stamp a heart on paper, writing "New Covenant" inside. Talk about God writing His love on our hearts—ties to Jeremiah 31.

Hymns:

"Break Thou the Bread of Life"
"Here, O My Lord, I See Thee Face to Face"
"According to Thy Gracious Word"
"I Come with Joy to Meet My Lord"
"Bread of the World, in Mercy Broken"

Contemporary Songs:

"In Christ Alone" by Keith & Kristyn Getty
"Behold the Lamb" by Passion
"Nothing But the Blood" by Matt Redman
"This Is the Air I Breathe" by Michael W. Smith

Church Connection: Join us at 6:30 PM for our communion service to break the fast and remember Jesus' sacrifice together—or share a simple meal at home to reflect on His love.

Day 6: Good Friday, April 18, 2025

Theme: The Promise of Atonement

Old Testament Scripture: Leviticus 17:11 (ESV)

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life.

New Testament Scripture: John 19:16b-30 (ESV)

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the Scripture), 'I thirst.' A jar full of sour wine stood there, so they put a sponge full of the sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, 'It is finished,' and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit."

Commentary/Application:

Leviticus 17:11 lays a foundation: life is in the blood, and God gave it for atonement—covering our sin through sacrifice. The Old Testament system demanded blood on the altar, a temporary fix for a broken relationship with God. On Good Friday, Jesus takes that promise to its pinnacle. Nailed to the cross, He cries, "I thirst," a human plea met with sour wine on hyssop—a Passover echo (Exodus 12:22). Then, "It is finished"—*tetelestai* in Greek, a word for a debt paid in full (Colossians 2:14). He bows His head and gives up His spirit, not defeated, but victorious, fulfilling every jot of God's word. That hyssop, that thirst, align with Psalm 69:21, proving He's the ultimate Lamb.

Before the cross, Jesus stood trial before Pilate (John 18:28-19:16), silent as a lamb (Isaiah 53:7), mocked as a king with a crown of thorns. Pilate asked, "Are you the King of the Jews?"—and Jesus affirmed it, His kingdom not of this world. The leaders shouted, "Crucify him!"

Leviticus' blood requirement finds its answer in Jesus—His life poured out atones not just for a year, but forever (Hebrews 9:26). "It is finished" isn't a whimper—it's a shout of triumph, canceling our sin-debt. When He thirsts, He's one of us; when He finishes, He's our Savior. The cross stands as the promise kept—sin's power broken; death's sting undone. For us, it's freedom: when guilt gnaws, whisper "It is finished" and release it—He's paid it. Thank Him for doing a work we couldn't do. Picture the sky darkening, then splitting with hope as He declares victory. God promised atonement, and Jesus delivered, proving His Word holds through the darkest hour. Dwell on that today—let it reshape how you see your life, forgiven and free under His grace.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Matthew 27:45-50; Mark 15:33-39; Luke 23:44-46; Psalm 69:20-21; Hebrews 9:11-14; Psalm 22:1-18

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. What did God say about blood in Leviticus? How did Jesus keep that promise?
2. Jesus said, "It is finished." What do you think He meant by that?
3. How does Jesus dying for us make you feel?

For Teens/Adults:

1. What does Jesus' death mean for our sins—why was it necessary?
2. How can we live differently because Jesus said, "It is finished"?
3. Jesus showed both weakness ("I thirst") and strength ("It is finished"). How does this balance speak to you?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. "I thirst" shows Jesus' humanity, and "It is finished" His victory. How do these words speak to you today?
2. Reflect on a time when you felt something in your life was "finished"—how did God bring hope?
3. How has the cross shaped your understanding of God's love over your lifetime?

Activities:

Cross Silhouette

- Materials: Paper, black marker or crayon, watercolors.
- Instructions: Draw or trace a simple cross on paper, and color it black. Color the background (sunset, sky) with watercolor, making the cross a silhouette. Talk about how Jesus' death brought light to the world. Write "Paid in Full" across the cross in white or yellow.

Red Ribbon Reminder

- Materials: Red ribbon or yarn, scissors, something to tie it to (e.g., wrist, doorknob).
- Instructions: Cut a piece of red ribbon for each person. Talk about how Jesus' blood paid for our sins ("It is finished"). Tie the ribbon somewhere you'll see it—like your wrist, a chair, on your keychain, or a doorknob—as a reminder of His sacrifice. When you notice it during the day, pause and say "Thank You" silently or aloud.

Hymns:

"Were You There"
"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross"
"O Sacred Head, Now Wounded"
"Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed"
"There Is a Green Hill Far Away"
"The Old Rugged Cross"
"Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

Contemporary Songs:

"It Was Finished Upon That Cross" by CityAlight
"It Is Finished" by Sovereign Grace Music
"The Cross Has the Final Word" by Cody Carnes
"O Praise the Name (Anástasis)" by Hillsong Worship
"Man of Sorrows" by Hillsong Worship
"I Stand Amazed" by Chris Tomlin

Church Connection: Attend our Good Friday service at the crosses at 6:30 PM, where our Elders will share devotionals on characters in the Resurrection story, reflecting on Jesus' sacrifice—or pause today to thank Him for the cross.

Day 7: Saturday, April 19, 2025

Theme: The Promise of Rest

Old Testament Scripture: Isaiah 53:9 (ESV)

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 27:57-66 (ESV)

"When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who also was a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. And Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen shroud and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had cut in the rock. And he rolled a great stone to the entrance of the tomb and went away."

Commentary/Application:

Isaiah 53:9 promises a specific end for the Suffering Servant: a grave with the wicked, yet with a rich man, despite His innocence. On this silent Saturday, that prophecy unfolds.

Jesus finished His work on the cross, and now Joseph of Arimathea—a wealthy disciple (someone who followed and loved Jesus)—steps forward, risking his status to ask Pilate for Jesus' body. He wraps it in clean linen and lays it in a new tomb, hewn from rock, fulfilling Isaiah's words to the letter. A great stone rolls shut, sealing the silence. The disciples are scattered, hope seems buried, and the world holds its breath. Meanwhile, the religious leaders, fearing Jesus' words about rising again, begged Pilate for a guard at the tomb (Matthew 27:62-66). They sealed the stone, thinking they'd won—yet God's promise was already at work, unstoppable. John 19:38-42 highlights Joseph's courage, acting when others hid, a quiet act of faith amid despair.

This day, the day of Sabbath for the Jews, embodies rest—Jesus' body lies still, the atonement complete, yet the story isn't over. God promised this burial, and it's kept, bridging yesterday's sacrifice to tomorrow's triumph. For us, it's a pause that mirrors life's waiting seasons—when prayers linger unanswered, when God seems silent. But He's working now, just as He was then. The tomb isn't defeat; it's preparation. Today, sit in that stillness, trusting He's moving even now. Or follow Joseph's example, a small act of devotion, like a kind word, showing faith in the quiet. God's promise of rest isn't abandonment; it's a prelude to resurrection. Let this day test and build your trust, knowing His timing is perfect, His word unbreakable.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 15:42-46; Luke 23:50-54; John 19:38-42; 1 Peter 3:18-20; Psalm 16:10

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. What did Isaiah say about where Jesus would be buried? How did Joseph keep it? Why do you think Joseph took care of Jesus' body so carefully?
2. What does it feel like to wait for something big, like your birthday, Christmas, or Easter?
3. How can we be quiet and think about Jesus today?

For Teens/Adults:

1. The disciples didn't know what was coming next. How do you think the disciples felt? How do we trust God when we're waiting in uncertainty?
2. Why do you think Joseph risked asking for Jesus' body—what does that say about his faith?
3. How can silence today help us prepare for the joy of tomorrow?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. Silence and waiting can be heavy. How has God met you in quiet moments of your life?
2. Joseph's act was one of love and courage. When have you stepped out in faith for Jesus?
3. How does this day of stillness remind you of God's timing in your own story?

Activities:

Tomb Model

- Materials: A small box or cup, a stone or coin, cloth or tissue.
- Instructions: Wrap a small figure (like a toy or paper cutout) in cloth to represent Jesus. Place it in a "tomb" (box/cup) and cover it with a stone. Leave it until tomorrow, talking about waiting for Easter. **MAKE SURE TO REMOVE IT BEFORE TOMORROW MORNING!**

Hope Jar

- Materials: A jar or container, small slips of paper, pens.
- Instructions: Imagine you're waiting like the disciples. Write down one hope or question you're holding onto (e.g., "I hope Jesus helps me with..." or "Why is waiting hard?") on a slip of paper. Fold it and place it in the jar. Seal it shut and set it aside saying together: "We trust You, Jesus, even in the quiet."

Hymns:

"What Wondrous Love Is This"
"Jesus, Lover of My Soul"
"Near the Cross"
"Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me"
"It Is Well"

Contemporary Songs:

"The Silence of God" by Andrew Peterson
"Ancient of Days" by CityAlight
"Rest In You" by All Sons & Daughters
"Still" by Rend Collective
"Waiting Here for You" by Christy Nockels

Church Connection: Today, we wait quietly, preparing our hearts for Easter Sunday's celebration—reflect on how Wednesday's prayer time deepened your trust in Him. Prepare now for tomorrow's sunrise service at 7:00 AM and regular Worship Service at 10:00 AM.

Day 8: Easter Sunday, April 20, 2025

Theme: The Promise of Resurrection and Return

Old Testament Scripture: Job 19:25-27 (ESV)

For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth... and in my flesh I shall see God...

New Testament Scripture: Matthew 28:1-7 (ESV)

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.'"

Commentary/Application:

We may not think of Job when we think of Easter, but Job's cry in Job 19:25-27 is full of hope like we find on Easter morning: "My Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth... in my flesh I shall see God." Amid loss, Job clung to a promise of life beyond the grave.

Today, hope explodes into reality. The angel at the tomb declares, "He has risen, as He said," fulfilling Jesus' own words (Matthew 16:21). The stone's rolled back, the tomb's empty—God's promise of resurrection breaks through. "Come, see... go quickly and tell," the angel urges, inviting witness and proclamation. That evening, Jesus appeared to His disciples, saying, 'Peace be with you' (John 20:19-21), proving He's alive and with us still. Even doubting Thomas believed, touching His wounds (John 20:27-29). This isn't just a past event; Romans 6:4 ties us to it—we rise with Him. But there's more: "He is going before you to Galilee" hints at His return (Matthew 24:30-31), when He'll stand on earth again, and we'll see Him face-to-face, as Job foresaw.

Yesterday's rest gives way to today's joy—fear becomes wonder, death becomes life. The resurrection fulfills Job's trust and Jesus' promise, proving God's Word conquers even the grave (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). It's our victory too, reshaping how we face every trial. And that forward look—His return—keeps us expectant, living for the day we'll see our Redeemer. God promised life and a living King, and Jesus kept both, doubling our hope. Celebrate today—shout it out, share it boldly, let it lift you. He's alive, and He's coming back, sealing every promise with unshakable power.

Related Passages for Further Study:

Mark 16:4-7; Luke 24:4-8; John 20:1-9; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8; Matthew 24:30-31

Discussion Questions:

For Young Children:

1. The angel said, "He has risen!" How would you tell your friends this good news?
2. Why do you think the women were surprised to find the tomb empty?
3. How can we tell others that Jesus is alive?

For Teens/Adults:

1. What does Jesus' resurrection mean for your life today—how does it give you hope?
2. The angel told the women to "go quickly and tell." How can we share this news with others?
3. Why do you think Jesus went ahead to Galilee—what does that say about His plans for us?

For Deeper Reflection:

1. Job trusted a living Redeemer—how does Easter deepen that trust for you?
2. "Do not be afraid" was the angel's message. How does the resurrection take away your fears?
3. The resurrection promises His return. How does that future hope shape your present?

Activities:

Empty Tomb Celebration

- Materials: The tomb model from yesterday, optional treats (like jellybeans).
- Instructions: Open the tomb from Saturday—remove the stone and cloth to find it empty! Shout "He is risen!" together. Share a small treat to celebrate new life in Jesus.

Sunrise Shout

- Materials: None required
- Instructions: At sunrise (or anytime), gather at a window or step outside. Face the light and take turns shouting something the resurrection means to you (e.g., "Jesus is alive!" "I'm forgiven!" "Hope wins!"). End with a big family cheer: "He is risen—Hallelujah!" If you can't do it at sunrise, just pretend the light is breaking through the tomb!

Hymns:

"Christ the Lord Is Risen Today"
"Jesus Christ Is Risen Today"
"The Strife Is O'er, the Battle Done"
"Up from the Grave He Arose"
"Thine Be the Glory"
"He Lives"

Contemporary Songs:

"Yours (Glory and Praise)" by Elevation Worship
"Resurrection Power" by Chris Tomlin
"Glorious Day" by Casting Crowns
"Living Hope" by Phil Wickham
"Because He Lives (Amen)" by Matt Maher
"Death Was Arrested" by North Point Worship

Church Connection: Celebrate with us at our Easter sunrise service at the Resurrection Garden at 7:00 AM, breakfast at 8:00 AM, and the regular worship service at 10:00 AM as we rejoice in Jesus' resurrection—or shout 'He is risen!' together at home to proclaim His victory!

The Road Ahead: Easter as the Beginning

Scripture: Psalm 119:105 (ESV) and Hebrews 12:1-2 (ESV)

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses... let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith...”

Reflection:

Easter Sunday isn’t the end—it’s the beginning of a life reshaped by God’s kept promises. This week, we’ve walked with Jesus from His humble entry as King to His victorious resurrection, seeing promise after promise unfold: a righteous King, a holy place, a Suffering Servant, a new covenant, atonement, rest, and life beyond the grave. Each day revealed God’s faithfulness—His Word standing firm through centuries, sealed in the empty tomb. But the story doesn’t end at the sunrise shout. Jesus’ resurrection and His promise to return should launch us into a lifelong pursuit of trust, worship, and growth.

Job knew his Redeemer lived; the women at the tomb saw Him risen; and we, too, are called to live in that light. Easter proves God’s promises aren’t just history—they’re alive, active, and personal, inviting us to know Him more. The same Word that foretold the cross and empty tomb guides us now, a lamp for every step, a light for every shadow. Jesus, the “founder and perfecter of our faith,” isn’t done with us yet—He’s gone ahead, as He did to Galilee, calling us to follow.

So, don’t let this week be a finish line—make it a “starting block.” Commit as a family or individual to dive deeper into God’s Word. Pick a book of the Bible—maybe John, to linger with the risen Jesus, or Psalms, to echo the praises and laments we’ve felt this week. Set a time each day or week to read, reflect, and pray together, just as you’ve done with these devotions. Ask questions like the ones we’ve pondered: How is God keeping His promises today? How can I trust Him more? Share what you learn—around the table with your family, with a friend, or even in a journal. Below are some suggested resources to help you as you move toward Christ each day.

Easter’s victory is your fuel: because He lives, you can run this race with endurance, eyes on Jesus. God’s Word is a treasure chest of promises waiting to be opened—don’t stop now. Let this week ignite a hunger to know Him, trust Him, and live for Him, until the day He returns to stand upon the earth, and we see Him face-to-face. He’s kept every promise so far—He’ll keep you too.

Reading Plans to Guide Your Steps

-The Bible in One Year (YouVersion Bible App)

Imagine a year-long walk through Scripture—Genesis to Revelation, one day at a time. With the free YouVersion app, you’ll weave through Old Testament, New Testament, and Psalms or Proverbs daily. Read it aloud together or let the app’s voice carry the words. For little ones, try “Bible for Kids” in the same app—short tales they’ll cling to.

-Read Scripture Plan (Read Scripture App)

This app provides a path through Scripture’s heart, crafted to show its beauty and flow, with videos to set the stage. The free Read Scripture app, from The Bible Project, offers a year-long plan blending Old and New Testament readings with Psalms and Proverbs. Watch a quick video as a family, read the day’s portion, and ask, “What’s God revealing?”

-Book-at-a-Time Bible Reading Plan (The Navigators)

Think of dipping into a new book each month—Mark today, Genesis tomorrow, with Psalms woven in. This plan from navigators.org (a free PDF) offers 25 readings a month, leaving room for busy days. Print it, slip it in your Bible, and read together.

-Through the Bible (Through the Word App)

This app takes you on a journey where every book of the Bible unfolds with a voice to guide you—short audio teachings paired with daily readings. The free Through the Word app offers plans like “Through the Bible in a Year,” breaking Scripture into bite-sized pieces with 5-10 minute talks. Gather to listen, then read together, asking, “What stuck with us?” like your devotional’s questions. It’s a gentle hand for busy days, leading you through His Word with care.

-The Bible Recap by Tara-Leigh Cobble (Also available as book)

Offers a chronological reading plan paired with a free podcast (or app) where each day’s 5-10 minute episode unpacks what you’ve read. Start with Genesis or jump in anywhere, reading the day’s portion from your Bible, then listen as Tara-Leigh highlights the “God Shot”—a glimpse of who God is. Gather as a family or on your own, and after each episode, ask, “What did we see about God today?” It’s perfect for all ages—simple enough for kids to follow, deep enough to stir adult hearts.

Devotional Books to Gather Around

-The Jesus Storybook Bible by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Open a book where every tale sings of Jesus—bright pages that pull kids close and stir adult souls. Read one story each night. It’s a warm embrace of His love, from beginning to end.

-The Ology: Ancient Truths, Ever New by Marty Machowski

Think of a treasure chest of faith—big truths about God made simple, with pictures and Scripture for all ages. Read a short piece together, maybe over supper, and talk about what it reveals.

-Indescribable: 100 Devotions About God and Science by Louie Giglio

Imagine marveling at God’s world—100 short devotions blending Scripture with wonders like stars and storms. It’s a great bridge between His Word and His works.

-Exploring the Bible Together: A 52-Week Family Devotional by David Murray

Picture a year of weekly pauses—readings, questions, and prayers to share. Set aside 20 minutes, like you did this week, and let every voice chime in.

-Long Story Short and Old Story New by Marty Machowski

Imagine ten-minute moments that draw you to Jesus—these are two different books, one for the Old Testament (Long Story Short), one for the New (Old Story New).

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