

THE PATH TO EASTER

a lenten study

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COUNTING STARS:

Embracing a Plan as Old as Abraham

Sunday sermon text: Romans 4:1-24

For the promise to Abraham and his offspring that he would be heir of the world did not come through the law but through the righteousness of faith. - Romans 4:13

As Paul makes clear in the epistle to the Romans, there has always been one (and only one) path to right standing with God—trusting in the grace of Jesus Christ. Likewise, a dominant theme of Luke’s gospel is the plan and providence of God for salvation through Christ. He frequently uses the Greek word “dei,” which means “it is necessary.” In fact, he uses this word nineteen times, while it’s present only a handful of times in the rest of the Gospels.

Thus, as Luke highlights in his Gospel, Jesus sets His face like flint toward Jerusalem—toward His suffering, toward His cross. It had to be. There was no other way to redeem the lost. Jesus’ death was no stop-gap measure; it was God’s foreordained plan to fulfill promises as ancient as Abraham.



Day 1 - Monday, March 13

Luke 2:41-52

1. What details do you notice about this story that you may have overlooked before? Or what particulars stand out to you about this scene in Jesus' early life?

2. What does Jesus' response to his parents communicate about his heart and the plan of God?

Luke 4:42-44

3. What phrase communicates "dei" - the idea of God's necessary plan - and what is its significance in this context?

4. In what region is Jesus located in Luke 4:42-44? (Take a look back a little earlier in chapter 4 to find out.) Locate this region on a map and note where it is with regard to Jerusalem.

Prayer Prompt

What purposes of Jesus are illustrated in these two passages? Take a few minutes to praise Jesus for being crystal clear about his aim while on earth and for obediently walking in step with God's design.



Day 2 - Tuesday, March 14

Luke 9:18-22

1. Why would the crowd have said that Jesus was...

- a. John the Baptist?
- b. Elijah?
- c. One of the prophets of old who has risen?

2. Why does Jesus command his disciples in strong terms not to speak of him as the Messiah? How does Luke's use of "dei" (translated "must") drive this point home?

Isaiah 53:10-11

3. What is your reaction to this prophetic statement about the Suffering Servant, "Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him"?

4. What good will come for the Messiah on the other side of his suffering?

Prayer Prompt

Spend a few minutes in awe and worship for God's amazing, merciful, costly plan that brought salvation.



Day 3 - Wednesday, March 15

Luke 9:51-56

1. How would you describe the meaning of the idiom “he set his face to”? How does this inform your understanding of Luke 9:51?

2. Take time to note Jesus’ location and where he is in Chapter 9 as opposed to Chapter 4.

Luke 13:31-36

3. In this passage, how do the Pharisees misunderstand the aim of Jesus?

4. How did Jesus’ deep conviction in the plan and purposes of God that “must” happen set him free from fear?

5. Note the three times that want or will are expressed for the following parties...

- a. What did Herod want?
- b. What would Jesus want to do?
- c. What were the people of Jerusalem unwilling to do?

Prayer Prompt

Worship Jesus for his compassion that longs to draw us to himself as a hen gathers her brood under her wings.



Day 4 - Thursday, March 16

Luke 22:37

1. What does Jesus state here as being “necessary” in the plan of God?

Isaiah 53:12

2. How does reading Isaiah 53:12 in its entirety explain why Jesus had to be numbered with the transgressors?

3. How will the Suffering Servant be different from the transgressors with which he is numbered?

4. What impact would Jesus’ statement in Luke 22:37 have had on his disciples as Hebrews who would have been familiar with Isaiah 53?

Prayer Prompt

Confess to Jesus your transgressions and thank him for bearing your sin and making intercession for you.

Day 5 - Friday, March 17

Romans 4:13-25

1. Do a little quick research to determine how long Abraham lived before Jesus.

2. Fill in the chart below with all you learn about faith and the law in this passage.

FAITH	LAW

3. What was the result of Abraham being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised?

4. What will be counted to us who believe in him who raised Jesus from the dead?

Prayer Prompt

Praise the Lord for his ancient plan of salvation – one that always depended on faith and was planned by the sovereign grace of God. Thank God that your inclusion as an heir has not come through adherence to the law.

A collection of approximately 15 small, gold-colored, multi-pointed stars scattered across the upper portion of the page, above the main title.

BUILDING HOPE:

Growing Spiritual Muscle Day by Day

Sunday sermon text: Romans Romans 5:1-5

Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. - Romans 5:3-5

Jesus' suffering not only informs and instructs how we might suffer well but is the very source of hope in the midst of our hardships. We now have the opportunity to build spiritual strength through our difficulties because Jesus entered into our plight and redeemed every ounce of the human experience. As we'll read this week, as Jesus was preparing to experience the most horrific physical pain of crucifixion, he also bore the emotional torture of rejection, mockery, and abject loneliness. His merciful entrance into our human plight and victory over the grave opens to us the hope of heaven, the riches of our spiritual inheritance, and the mind-boggling supernatural reality of fruitful suffering.



Day 6 - Monday, March 20

Luke 22:1-23

1. What did the Jews celebrate at the Passover? (See Exodus 12 for help.)
2. Luke 22:15 literally says in the Greek, “With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you.” Why do you think Jesus so earnestly wanted to celebrate this feast with his disciples?
3. Jesus takes the cup and declares that “this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” What was the old covenant with which the disciples would have been familiar? (See Deuteronomy 28 for a refresher.)
4. Reread verses 3-6 and 21-22. Was it Judas who caused Jesus to be betrayed? Where do you see Luke’s theme of God’s sovereign plan in Jesus’ statement?

Prayer Prompt

Thank Jesus for giving his body and spilling his blood on your behalf ... that you might receive the benefit of a NEW covenant...one made between the Father and the Son and upheld by his perfect righteousness.



Day 7 - Tuesday, March 21

Luke 22:24-38

1. Describe the irony you notice in an argument breaking out among the disciples about who is the greatest after Jesus institutes the Lord's Supper.

2. What do we learn about the nature of the kingdom of God in this passage? What kind of leadership is demonstrated in God's kingdom? What do we receive as a member of this kingdom?

3. Jesus gave Simon the name "Peter" in Luke 5:3. Why do you suppose that he repeatedly refers to him as "Simon" in this passage?

4. Read verses 31-34 thoughtfully and list all that you learn about spiritual warfare in the exchange between Jesus and Peter. (Also, note what Jesus insinuates that the outcome of Peter's denial will be.)

Prayer Prompt

Pray through the precious words of *Come Thou Fount* - "Prone to wander, Lord I feel it, prone to leave the God I love. Here's my heart, Lord, take and seal it, seal it for Thy courts above."



Day 8 - Wednesday, March 22

Luke 22:39-53

1. What is surprising about Jesus' instructions to the disciples in v. 40 and v. 46? How might you have expected him to direct the disciples in prayer?
2. List all of the words Luke uses to describe the distress Jesus felt as he prayed and the ministry he received.
3. Where in this passage do you see evidence of Jesus' power and sovereignty?
4. Who does Jesus see as behind the actions of the chief priests and officers of the temple and elders? In other words, who is the real enemy?

Prayer Prompt

Praise Jesus for his perfect obedience to the will of the Father – even in the face of horrific debt. Thank him for being willing to drink the cup of God's wrath on your behalf that you might be forever restored to the Father.



Day 9 - Thursday, March 23

Luke 22:54-71

1. How does Luke describe the setting of Peter's denials?

2. Fill out this chart according to the details in this passage.

	Who approaches Peter?	What do they say to him?	How does he respond?
1st Denial			
2nd Denial			
3rd Denial			

3. The Greek word translated “looked at” in verse 61 means “to look on, to observe fixedly, or to discern clearly.”¹ This word is also used in Mark 10:21. Considering the definition and its use in Mark 10, what do you think Peter saw in Jesus’ face when their eyes met?

4. Allow your holy imagination to export you to the moment when Jesus turned and looked at Peter. How do you imagine Peter felt in that moment and what thoughts might have been swirling through his mind?

Prayer Prompt

Worship the Lord for his compassionate gaze that’s always yours in Christ, even in your weakest moments.

¹ James Strong, *The Strongest Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Thomas Nelson, 2001), 641.



Day 10 - Friday, March 24

Romans 5:3-5

1. Since Paul begins verse 3 by saying “Not only that,” take a look back at the preceding verses of chapter 5 and note what he’s said thus far.

2. Look in a Bible dictionary (many are available online) to define endurance, character, and hope.

3. What image comes to your mind when you read that “God’s love has been poured into our hearts?”
(For Paul’s other uses of the verb translated “pour,” see Titus 3:6 and Acts 2:17.)

4. How does all that you studied so far this week about the suffering of Jesus underscore Paul’s theology of suffering?

Prayer Prompt

Set aside some time to rejoice in the midst of difficult places of your journey right now – knowing that through them the Lord produces all His promised goodness for you because of his steadfast, perfect love. Ask him for an abundance of endurance and character and hope!



TRUSTING GOD'S LOVE:

Discovering Why You Can't Disillusion God

Sunday Sermon Text: Romans 5:6-11

For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. - Romans 5:6

As you study the details of the Passion narrative this week, allow the truth of Romans 5:6 to ring in your ears. Revel in the fact that Jesus didn't wait on us to rightly acknowledge him, to repent, to clean ourselves up, or to get our act together before dying in our place. In fact, Paul says that when we were at our very worst Christ died for us. If Christ has shown you his deepest love at your weakest moment, what could you possibly do to lose his affection?

○ the deep, deep love of Jesus!



Day 11 - Monday, March 27

Luke 23:1-16

1. Of what wrongdoing did the religious leaders and people accuse Jesus before Pilate? How do they draw together Jewish and Roman concerns in their accusations?
2. Take a look back at Luke 9:21-22, 9:44-45, and 18:31-34. How do Jesus' predictions of the events that take place before Pilate and Herod serve to reinforce the role of God's sovereignty and plan in Jesus' death and resurrection?
3. See Acts 4:26-27 and note the nature of the "friendship" that developed between Herod and Pilate.
4. Why do you think that Pilate finds no fault in Jesus? Was it an expression of faith? How may this conclusion be politically motivated?

Prayer Prompt

Express your gratitude and praise to Jesus for submitting himself to the ironic and hostile mocking of earthly kings so that you might no longer be mocked before the Enemy of your soul.



Day 12 - Tuesday, March 28

Luke 23:18-25

1. What do we learn about Barabbas in this passage? What effect does Luke repeating his crimes have on the reader? In other words, what emphasis does this create?

2. What do we learn about the chief priests, the rulers, and the people?

3. What do we learn about Pilate?

4. Jot down all that you know about crucifixion and ponder what a heinous cry this was for Jesus' punishment.

Prayer Prompt

Ponder how our sinful hearts put us in the place of Barabbas, the crowd, and Pilate at times. Praise Jesus for his grace in loving us despite our sin and transforming us to desire and live for his glory!



Day 13 - Wednesday, March 29

Luke 23:26-43

1. Make note of the various parties who mocked Jesus and the reviling words they spoke as he hung on the cross.
2. What do we learn about the heart of Jesus from his statement in verse 34?
3. Take a look at Peter's sermon in Acts 3, particularly verses 17-21. How does Jesus' request of the Father from the cross make Peter's gospel proclamation to the Jewish people possible?
4. Contrast the perspectives of the two criminals who were crucified alongside Jesus. What was it about the second criminal that led Jesus to say, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise"?

Prayer Prompt

Praise Jesus for his perfect obedience to the will of the Father – even in the face of horrific debt. Thank him for being willing to drink the cup of God's wrath on your behalf that you might be forever restored to the Father.



Day 14 - Thursday, March 30

Luke 23:44-49

1. Using the footnotes in your Bible, make note of the times Luke refers to as “the sixth hour” and the “ninth hour.” What is significant about darkness over the whole land in this window of time?

2. See Exodus 26:31-35 and list all that you learn about the “curtain of the temple.” What did it look like? What purpose did it serve? Thus, what is represented by it being torn in two upon Jesus’ death?

3. What are Jesus’ last words? Take a look at Psalm 31:1-5, as Jesus quotes verse 5 in his final words from the cross. When you read verse 5 in context, what do you learn about the meaning of this heartfelt expression to the Father?

4. A centurion was a Roman soldier in charge of many soldiers. Likely he had witnessed many crucifixions. What made this one different and led him to proclaim, “Certainly this man was innocent”?

Prayer Prompt

Praise Jesus for opening the way for you to the throne room of God! Ask him to help you enter into and enjoy all the benefits of his presence in your everyday life.



Day 15 - Friday, March 31

Romans 5:6-11

1. In this section Paul describes in three different ways the state we were in when Christ died for us.

What are they?

While we were still _____

While we were still _____

While we were _____

2. Note all the things the ungodly receive through the death of Christ.

3. What does this passage teach us about the love of God?

4. What confidence does the truth of this passage develop in you?

Prayer Prompt

Allow yourself space to worship the Lord for his going-first, never-giving-up, transforming love!



REIGNING IN LIFE:

Learning to Share in Jesus' Victory

Sunday Sermon Text: Romans 5:12-21

For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

- Romans 5:17

In the reading this week we'll see the resurrected Christ bring surprises for the mourners, answers for the downtrodden, proof for the doubters, courage for the fearful, power for the insecure, and purpose for the aimless. In fact, his defeat of death changes everything for his followers. As you study, note how the life of the one man Jesus Christ comes to them and moves through them. Celebrate the triumph of Jesus over death and revel in the victory that's been given to you by his grace!



Day 16 - Monday, April 3

Luke 23:50-56

1. What is the primary characteristic Luke communicates about Joseph of Arimathea that distinguishes him from the rest of the council? How do you think this affected his view of Jesus?

2. Take a look at the following passages (and glance at their context) to understand how the Jews felt about a dead body lacking burial.

Deuteronomy 28:26

Jeremiah 8:1-2

Jeremiah 16:1-4

Ezekiel 29:5

As you take that into consideration, why do you think Joseph of Arimathea wanted to give Jesus a proper burial?

3. Take note of all you can learn about “the women who had come with him from Galilee” from the following passages.

Luke 23:55-56

Luke 8:1-3

Mark 15:40

4. What day of the week is the Jewish Sabbath and what purpose does Luke’s mention of the Sabbath observation serve in his resurrection narrative?

Prayer Prompt

Praise the Lord for these ordinary people who had the courage to act on their love for him in the midst of such turmoil. Ask him to give you that same courage!



Day 17 - Tuesday, April 4

Luke 24:1-12

1. What 3 surprises awaited the women at the tomb?

2. Take a look at the following passages and note how Jesus prepared his disciples for what was to come.

Why do you think they were still surprised, confused, and dismayed?

Mathew 12:39-40

Matthew 20:17-19

Luke 9:18-22

Luke 13:31-35

John 2:19-22

3. Look up Luke 24:11 in a few different Bible translations and record how each one describes the reaction of the disciples to the women's testimony.

4. Jot down some times in your own life that God's plan was perplexing or even disorienting to you. How did you see good come out of what initially felt like a wrong turn in your story?

Prayer Prompt

Allow the Lord to search your heart as you ponder the question, "Where am I seeking the living among the dead?" Respond to the Spirit's leading and ask him for grace to seek true life in every area of your life.



Day 20 - Friday, April 7

Romans 5:17

1. Look back (starting in Romans 5:12) to determine who is the one man whose trespass brought death.

2. Contrast the one man with Jesus Christ. What does each of them offer? What is the result for many?

3. The word translated “reigned” comes from the Greek word *basileuo* and in its metaphorical usage it means “to exercise the highest influence, to control.”² How does this definition enhance your understanding of Romans 5:17?

4. What does it practically look like for the Christian to “reign in life”?

Prayer Prompt

Ask the Lord if there are any areas of your life in which you are not embracing the victory he’s provided by his grace and the free gift of righteousness and lean into this wonderful freedom.

²“Lexicon :: Strong’s G936 - *Basileuō*.” www.blueletterbible.org. Accessed January 13, 2023.

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