

THE CALM OF CHRIST

ON THE PATH TO EASTER

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The Truth Will Set You Free

Sunday sermon text: John 8:31-32, John 14:6

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." - John 8:31-32

Christ is calm because He always knows the truth. In fact, Jesus declares that He is the way, the truth, and the life who came to set us free from the tyranny of the Enemy's lies. Having peace and knowing the truth are inextricably linked.

This week we'll explore the peacefulness of Jesus in the face of untruths He encountered throughout his life. We'll ask the Lord to reveal deep-seated lies we believe that fuel our anxiety and replace them with His truth.

Day 1 – Monday, March 24

Matthew 4:1-11

Reflect

1. Take note of what happened directly before this scene in Matthew 3:13-17. How does the flow of Matthew's narrative give us insight into the heart of Satan's temptations?
2. Fill out the chart below.

	Setting	Devil's Statement	Jesus' Response
Temptation #1			
Temptation #2			
Temptation #3			

3. Use your Bible or do a little online research to find out what Scriptures Jesus quotes in this passage. Take note of any clarity or depth of understanding you gain through looking at the Old Testament passages He uses to respond to the devil.

4. What clues do Jesus' responses give us into the untroubled nature of His heart during this extremely trying encounter?

Respond

Where does your heart feel troubled? Ask the Lord to show you if there are underlying lies contributing to your angst and pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth.

Day 2 – Tuesday, March 25

Matthew 5:1-12

Reflect

1. The word translated “blessed” is perhaps best articulated as “the good life.” Off the top of your head, how would you describe “the good life”?

2. Fill in the chart to reflect the cultural lie Jesus is addressing with each beatitude statement. (Looking up these verses in other translations may deepen your understanding.)

	Cultural lie Jesus is addressing	Promise for this group of people
Blessed are the poor in spirit	<i>Neediness is shameful</i>	<i>Theirs is the kingdom of heaven</i>
Blessed are those who mourn		
Blessed are the meek		
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness		
Blessed are the merciful		
Blessed are the pure in heart		
Blessed are the peacemakers		
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake		
Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account		

“The [Sermon on the Mount] is not how we achieve salvation; it’s how we demonstrate it.”

– Rich Villodas, The Narrow Path

3. How do the truths of the kingdom economy as articulated by Jesus in these verses address the cultural lies you listed above?

4. What are some examples from the life of Jesus that illustrate His commitment to this “good life”?

Respond

Which one of the Beatitudes is most challenging for you to embrace? Write a prayer asking God to open your eyes to the reality and power of His kingdom values in this area and trust God’s truth to set you free from an earthly value system.

Day 3 – Wednesday, March 26

Mark 10:35-45

Reflect

1. Read Mark 1:19-20. What do you learn about James and John from their first encounter with Jesus?
2. What lie did James and John (and perhaps all of the disciples) believe that led them to make this request of Jesus?
3. What does their request imply about the kind of Messiah they were expecting Jesus to be?
4. To what truth did Jesus ascribe that allowed Him to avoid the angst of seeking greatness according to the world?

The cup and the baptism Jesus talks about in verse 38 refer to the wrath of God that He will bear on behalf of sinners. The same reference applied to the disciples in verse 39 refers generally to the suffering the disciples will face as His followers and leaders of the Church.

Respond

Think of a place in your life in which it's difficult to experience joy in the service of others or where you feel jealous of another's position or esteem. Take time to be honest before the Lord regarding your feelings. Thank Jesus for His ultimate service and being a ransom for your life!

Breathe in for 3 counts and say to yourself, "Greatness is found..."

Breathe out for 4 counts and say to yourself, "...as I lay my life down."

Day 4 – Thursday, March 27

Matthew 16:21-28

Reflect

1. What lie is Peter operating under when he rebukes Jesus in verse 22?
2. Why did Jesus address Peter as Satan in verse 23? (This is particularly interesting given His declaration of blessing on Peter in vv. 17-19.)
3. According to verses 24-28, what is it that Jesus knew (as His mind was set on the things of God) that the disciples did not yet understand?
4. How did this knowledge (from question #3) fuel His insistence on adhering to the plan for His suffering and death?

Respond

Journal through a time in your life when God brought redemption through difficult or even tragic circumstances. How does remembering God's faithfulness and power calm your heart with regard to potential difficulties that may lie ahead?

Day 5 – Friday, March 28

John 14:1-7

Reflect

1. Take a look at John 13 to determine the setting for Jesus’ conversation with His disciples in today’s passage. How does the timing of this interaction highlight the significance of His opening statement in chapter 14 – “Let not your hearts be troubled”?

2. Note how John reiterates the message of verse 6 in the following passages.

John 1:14

1 John 5:20

3. What are other things or people or circumstances that threaten to define truth for you other than Jesus?

4. How does this passage inform the way we can respond to the lies that bombard us daily?

Respond – Replacing Lies with the Truth

Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44) and his mission is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10). He often attacks our minds because our patterns of thought have a profound impact on the way we live. Faulty beliefs frequently fuel anxiety. However, as Christ-followers the Lord invites us to renew our minds with His truth (Romans 12:2) and walk in the freedom of peace Jesus has secured for us to enjoy (John 8:36).

Take some unhurried time to look through this list of lies and ask the Lord to highlight the untruths embedded in your thought patterns. Meditate on the coordinating truth for a few minutes and ask the Lord to apply it to your inmost places (Psalm 51:6).

Lies	Truth
<i>I am alone.</i>	God will never leave me or forsake me. (Deut. 31:6-8)
<i>God doesn't care.</i>	My walls are ever before the Lord. He collects my tears and rises to show me compassion. (Is. 49:16, Is. 30:18)
<i>I don't need community.</i>	I was designed to know and be known. (Ps. 133:1, Ecc. 4:9-12)
<i>I can't move forward.</i>	In Christ I am continually being transformed from one glory to the next. (2 Cor. 3:18)
<i>My feelings or my experience define the truth.</i>	Jesus Himself defines truth. (John 14:6)
<i>God would move in my life if I had more faith.</i>	God is free and sovereign and bound by no one. (Job 42:2)
<i>My addiction makes me despicable.</i>	Nothing can separate me from the love of God. (Romans 8:38-39)

Lies	Truth
<i>My worth is attached to my success.</i>	My value is demonstrated by the price Jesus paid for my redemption - His very life. (Eph. 1:5-7)
<i>It's all my fault.</i>	No broken situation is beyond the Lord's ability to redeem. (Eph. 1:7-8)
<i>I have to have their approval.</i>	The Lord delights in me and has removed all condemnation from my life. (Zeph 3:17, Rom. 8:1)
<i>I can't fail.</i>	I have nothing to prove as Christ came for me when I was His enemy. (Rom. 5:10)
<i>I can change them.</i>	The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and He alone directs hearts. (Prov. 21:1)
<i>I have to defend myself.</i>	The Lord will vindicate and uphold the righteous. (Ps. 138:8, Ps. 37:17)
<i>God won't provide for me.</i>	My God is the most wealthy and generous being in the universe who sees my every need and promises to meet them. (Ps. 50:10, Matt. 6:31-33)

Lies	Truth
<i>My life doesn't matter.</i>	I am chosen and have good works prepared for me to do. (Eph. 1:4, 2:10)
<i>The best pleasures are found apart from God.</i>	There are eternal pleasures at God's right hand and He satisfies my desires. (Ps. 16:11, Ps. 145:16)
<i>It's not ok for me to be undone.</i>	God knows that I am dust and moves toward me in gentleness. (Ps. 103:14, Matt. 11:29)
<i>I am not lovely.</i>	I am the apple of the Lord's eye and He pursues me with an everlasting love. (Ps. 17:8, Jer. 31:3)
<i>I don't have what I need for the task ahead.</i>	God has given me all I need for life and godliness through knowledge of Him. (2 Peter 1:3-4)
<i>Amassing of possessions makes me more secure.</i>	The Lord Himself is my refuge and strength. (Psalm 46:1)



Awe Over Anxiety

Sunday sermon text: Mark 4:39-41, Matthew 10:26-33

And he awoke and rebuked the wind and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, "Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith? And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" - Mark 4:39-41

Christ is calm because He is awesome; His power is beyond comparison. Though at first God's mighty power may be frightening or overwhelming, there is much healing for our anxiety in recognizing that He wields His might for our good.

This week we'll explore scenes from the life of Jesus that demonstrate His majesty and might.

Day 6 – Monday, March 31

Mark 4:35-41

Reflect

1. How did Jesus serve as a non-anxious presence in this story?
2. Look up the following verses and jot down any pertinent phrases from them below. Given the disciples' knowledge of the Old Testament, what would this encounter have communicated to them about the identity of Jesus?
 - Psalm 33:7 -
 - Amos 4:13 -
3. How did the disciples handle the angst they felt as the boat was filling with water?
4. Write out Mark 4:41 in the following translations. How would you describe the shift in the types of fear the disciples felt throughout this story? How do you think their view of the wind and waves shifted?

ESV -

NLT -

The mountains around the Sea of Galilee create a funnel of sorts for winds that can bring sudden, furious storms upon unsuspecting boaters.

Respond

Sit in a comfortable, quiet spot and take a minute to relax with a few slow breaths. Read today's passage one more time and imagine yourself as a disciple in the boat with Jesus. In your mind's eye, what do you see? What do you feel? What do you hear? Do you smell anything? Imagine Jesus commanding the winds and waves to be still. Now imagine Jesus speaking His peace to whatever storm you are currently experiencing in life. How do you feel when the sea is calm?

Day 7 – Tuesday, April 1

Mark 5:1-20

Reflect

1. Make note of all you learn about the man at the center of this narrative.

BEFORE his encounter with Jesus	AFTER his encounter with Jesus

2. Write down the first sentence of verse 13. Yesterday we saw Jesus’ authority over nature.

Mark includes today’s story to display Jesus’ authority over _____.

Mark 5:13 -

3. Contrast how the man who had been delivered and the people in the area responded to Jesus’ awesome act of power and authority.

The man	The people

4. Why do you think the delivered man and the crowd of people had such different responses to Jesus? What made the man want to draw near to Jesus’ power but the people terrified of it?

Respond

Keeping in mind the welcoming, compassionate presence of Jesus, share with the Lord something in life that makes you feel afraid. Then repeat the below practice several times.

Breathe in for 3 counts and say to yourself, “Jesus, you are the master...”

Breathe out for 4 counts and say to yourself, “...of heaven and earth.”

Day 8 – Wednesday, April 2

Mark 6:30-44

Reflect

1. Take note of the enormity and complexity of the need presented in this passage.

2. How did the disciples express their angst in response to this need? How did Jesus demonstrate his calm?

3. What kind of conversations do you imagine the disciples had among themselves as they gathered twelve heavy baskets full of extra bread that no one could eat because they were stuffed with Jesus’ provision?

4. How do you think this experience formed the disciples’ view of overwhelming ministry needs in the days ahead?

Respond

Journal a few sentences about a time in your life when God demonstrated His power by providing for you abundantly in the face of an overwhelming need.

Day 9 – Thursday, April 3

Mark 6:45-52

Reflect

1. What insight does this passage give us into the heart of Christ toward His people?
2. What does Jesus offer as an antidote to the disciples' fear that He might be a ghost?
3. Translations of Jesus' response to the disciples include, "Take heart," "Have courage," and "Be of good cheer." How would you describe what He was communicating to them in your own words?
4. Read this story in the Gospel of Matthew (14:22-33). Taken together with what you've read in Mark's account, how do the disciples' emotions shift when they recognize Jesus?

Respond

Perceiving Jesus' compassionate and mighty presence in the midst of our personal storms – knowing that He has come near and holds all authority – can transform our anxiety to awe. Ask the Lord to open your eyes to His whereabouts in the midst of any personal storm you're facing today. Jot down what you sense He is showing you in prayer.

Day 10 – Friday, April 4

Mark 7:31-37

Reflect

1. What kind of angst do you imagine being deaf and speech-impaired in the ancient world would have caused?
2. What evidence does Mark provide in this passage to convey that the friends moved toward Jesus in faith with their troubled hearts?
3. How did the people who witnessed the deaf man's transformation respond? To widen your understanding, look up verse 37 in several translations.
4. Many scholars believe Mark is wanting readers to recall a poignant passage from Isaiah when they read this story. Isaiah 35 describes what life will be like when God intervenes to ransom His people. Read Isaiah 35:5-7. What are characteristics of the way Isaiah prophesies God will move?

Respond

Anxiety is an unavoidable part of the human experience. In dangerous scenarios, fight-or-flight is necessary for our preservation. It can also be helpful when a deadline is looming as that positive pressure sparks us into action on a project!

Experiencing a troubled heart can also drive us to Jesus. When our worship of Him outweighs the fear of what we're facing, we turn to our mighty Savior in assurance of His willingness to help us.

Think through the day or days ahead. As you do, notice any place in your body that feels tense as you anticipate upcoming events, tasks, interactions, gatherings. Bring that tension to the Lord in prayer. Allow it to drive you to Him!

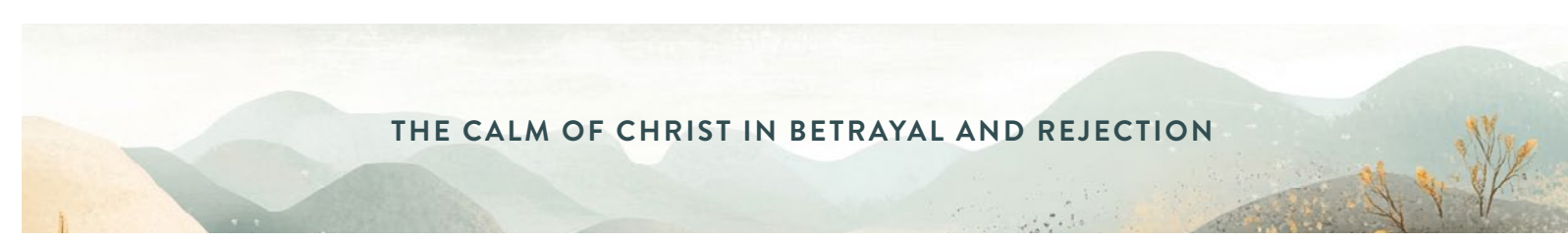


Healing Post-Trauma Anxiety

Sunday sermon text: Matthew 26:36-42, Hebrews 4:14-16, Ezekiel 26:36

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. - Hebrews 4:14-16

Christ is calm even when suffering. In the final week of his life He experienced horrific trauma, yet He displayed perfect peace as the One who knew that Resurrection Day was coming. He is certainly the High Priest who is well-acquainted with our griefs and able to sympathize with every temptation and pain we have experienced, opening up the help and healing of the Father to us.



THE CALM OF CHRIST IN BETRAYAL AND REJECTION

Day 11 – Monday, April 7

Matthew 26:14-25, 47-50

Reflect

1. Take note of all you learn about Judas and his role in Jesus' betrayal from these passages.
2. How did the disciples address Jesus in verse 22? Contrast this with how Judas addressed Jesus in verse 25. What do each of those titles mean?
3. Jesus communicated several things with just a few words in his response to Judas' betrayal with a kiss. What messages were embedded in this response? (verses 49-50)
4. What stands out to you about Jesus' demeanor in these interactions?

Respond

How have you experienced betrayal? Spend a few minutes meditating on the scenes we studied today. Think about how these interactions would have made Jesus feel. Thank Him that He fully understands the hurt you've experienced and wants to give you His calm even in the midst of betrayal.

Day 12 – Tuesday, April 8

Matthew 26:30-35, 69-75

Reflect

1. What clue did Jesus give in His prediction of the disciples’ denial that points to the reason for his calm demeanor (v. 31-32)?
2. Take note of the following details from verses 69-75.

	Accuser	Accusation	Peter’s Response
Peter’s 1st Denial			
Peter’s 2nd Denial			
Peter’s 3rd Denial			

3. How did Peter display angst in this story?
4. Write out the following verses that prophesied and spoke to the rejection Jesus experienced.
 - Isaiah 53:3
 - John 1:9-11
 - 1 Peter 2:4

Respond

Keeping in mind the loving gaze of the Father that is upon you in Christ, share with the Lord a place in which you feel the sting of rejection. Then repeat the below practice several times.

Breathe in for 3 counts and say to yourself, “I am accepted...”
 Breathe out for 4 counts and say to yourself, “...in the Beloved.”

Ephesians 1:6 (NKJV)

to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Day 13 – Wednesday, April 9

Matthew 26:36-46

Reflect

1. What emotions did Jesus experience in this passage? How did He handle those disturbing emotions?
2. What additional details does Luke 22:39-46 give us about this time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane?
3. Unlike many of us, Jesus knew His betrayal was coming and kept walking toward it anyway. What thoughts or feelings does this truth bring up in you?
4. Jesus endured two layers of betrayal in this scene. What are they?

Respond

Write a prayer praising Jesus for His faithfulness to the Father’s plan for our redemption!

Day 14 – Thursday, April 10

Matthew 27:1-2, 11-14, 27-31

Reflect

1. Complete the following with details found in verses 11-14.

Pilate's Question:

Jesus' Response:

Chief Priests' and Elders' Accusation: (we're not told the specifics)

Jesus' Response:

Pilate's Question:

Jesus' Response:

2. What is the irony of Jesus being questioned about His kingship and the manner in which He was mocked? (verses 27-29)
3. Why do you think Jesus was able to be silent in the face of the most unjust accusations of all time? (Passages such as Matthew 20:17-19 and Matthew 20:28 may be helpful to reference.)
4. What is your knee-jerk reaction when you are falsely accused or acutely misunderstood

Respond

se·ren·i·ty (sə'renədē)

Noun

the state of being calm, peaceful, and untroubled

– Oxford Languages

The well-known serenity prayer (usually credited to theologian Reinhold Niebuhr) is often incorporated into recovery programs like Alcoholics Anonymous. However, the truth and power of this prayer is helpful to anyone who is facing challenges.

Say this aloud:

*“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference.”*

What are a few circumstances or obstacles that you'd like to see changed, but don't have power to change?

What are some challenges that are in your power to address or correct?

Journal about ways that you find it challenging to accept what is beyond your control.

For the circumstances that you can control, what are the risks or fears that hold you back?

Day 15 – Friday, April 11

Hebrews 4:14-16

Reflect

1. Read Hebrews 2:14 and 2:17-18, which provide a wonderful backdrop for today's passage. Jot down key phrases that stand out to you from these verses.

2. Leviticus 16 details the life-or-death process that Aaron, the Israelites' first high priest, had to follow before entering the Most Holy Place, the innermost portion of the tabernacle where the Lord's manifest presence dwelled. He must be careful, as his sons had already died by drawing near to God's presence in impurity. As you answer the questions below, keep in mind how a human high priest pales in comparison with Christ who "has passed through the heavens," with full and perfect access to the Father.

Leviticus 16:3 – What offerings did Aaron have to make?

Leviticus 16:4 – What did Aaron have to do for cleansing? What did he need to wear?

Leviticus 16:5 – What did he need to take with him for offerings to cover his sin and the sin of the people?

3. What keeps you from drawing near to the throne of God with confidence (Heb. 4:16)?

4. According to Hebrews 4:16, what do God's people receive as a benefit of Jesus' high priestly work?

The underlying Greek word translated "sympathize" carries with it a sense of active assistance and enablement. "[The High Priest's] sympathetic help empowers us in the midst of all those inherent human limitations that make us vulnerable to temptation." – Lane, NICNT.

Respond

Bring a particularly painful part of your story before the Father in prayer. Praise Jesus as the only one who can fully identify with the pain you've endured. Thank Him for giving you permanent access to the Father where help and grace deeper than any trauma is readily available. Ask Him for what you need and linger in His presence as the Spirit ministers to you.



Fear Not – Behold Your King

Sunday sermon text: John 12:12-18

And Jesus found a young donkey and sat on it, just as it is written,

“Fear not, daughter of Zion;

Behold, your king is coming,

Sitting on a donkey’s colt!”

- John 12:14-15

King Jesus enters Jerusalem a few days before His crucifixion on a donkey rather than a horse and chariot, communicating the nature of His kingship. He comes in humility and power. Interestingly, John quotes Zechariah’s prophecy of this moment but adds the phrase “fear not,” perhaps remembering something Jesus said or emphasizing Jesus’ mission of peace.

This Holy Week we will explore the death and resurrection narratives of the King of Kings. This Prince of Peace conquered death and destroyed the one who holds the power of death so that His people might not have any reason to fear (Hebrews 2:14-15). Jesus served us to the uttermost that we might partake of His untroubled heart.

Day 16 – Monday, April 14

Matthew 27:32-56

Reflect

1. Take note of what the following groups of people said to Jesus as He was hanging on the cross.

Those who passed by –

Religious leaders –

Robbers crucified with him –

2. Though Jesus didn’t respond, how could He have rebutted these comments?

3. According to verses 51-54, what incredible ripple effects did people in Jerusalem observe upon Jesus’ death?

4. What detail about Matthew’s crucifixion account blesses you the most?

Respond

Sit in a comfortable position and relax your body as you contemplate Jesus’ cry from the cross (Matt. 27:46). Then complete the breathing exercise below several times.

Breathe in for 3 counts and say to yourself, “Jesus was forsaken...”

Breathe out for 4 counts and say to yourself, “...so I never will be.”

Day 17 – Tuesday, April 15

Luke 23:26-43

Reflect

1. What kind of fear and angst do you imagine the great multitude of people and the women following Jesus to Golgotha (verse 27) experienced as He hung on the cross under the title “King of the Jews”?
2. The scoffers viewed Jesus’ suffering as a denial of His divinity, but how did the declarations He made from the cross in this passage confirm his deity?
3. How did these two statements from the cross exhibit Jesus’ heart to bring peace?
4. How did the second criminal express his faith in Christ?

Respond

Take a few minutes to meditate on the exchange between Jesus and the second criminal. Imagine what he must have experienced emotionally and spiritually as he heard Jesus’ words of promise while justly being executed for his wrongdoing. Jot down anything the Lord shows you through this exercise about His heart for you.

Day 18 – Wednesday, April 16

John 20:1-18

Reflect

1. This scene is a wonderful example of how living out of an untruth deeply affects our perspective and emotions. What is the untruth Mary Magdalene operated under in this passage and what effect did it have on her?
2. How does the report of what Peter and John (the disciple Jesus loved) saw inside the tomb refute Mary Magdalene’s hypothesis that the body of Jesus was stolen?
3. What are the profound implications of Jesus’ statement to Mary in verse 17 regarding all that would be available to Jesus’ disciples in the wake of his death and resurrection?
“I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”
4. What causes Mary’s turn-around?

Respond

“Seeing the Lord” as Mary testified in John 18:20 transforms our perspective and often deeply impacts our emotions. Most of the “fear not” commands in Scripture are coupled with promises of God’s presence. As author Paula Rinehart states, “The worst part of pain is not the misfortune itself but the apparent God-forsakenness of it.”

Bring something that is upsetting you before the Lord. Pour out your heart to Him about it (Psalm 62:8) and ask Him to open your eyes to see Him in the midst of that difficulty. May the Lord turn your attention to His presence and power that is always working on your behalf.

Day 19 – Thursday, April 17

John 20:19-23

Reflect

1. What details does John share regarding when and where this scene takes place? How are the disciples doing at the outset of the passage?
2. How does Jesus greet the disciples? Why is this surprising given their conduct before He was crucified?
3. How did the disciples' emotions shift upon seeing Jesus? Write John 16:22 below and note how this response is a fulfillment of Jesus' promise.
4. Write out John 14:27 in the space below. Truly, Jesus fulfilled His promise to bequeath peace to his people.

“In saying ‘Peace be unto you’ [Jesus] announced that enmity had been removed, God placated, reconciliation effected; in pointing to the signs of His crucifixion, He showed what had accomplished these.” – Arthur Pink

Respond

Write a prayer thanking the Lord that He comes to find you with His offer of peace even when you are unfaithful. Praise Him as the unstoppable God who made a way to bless and empower us with His peace.

Day 20 – Friday, April 18

John 20:1-18

Reflect

1. According to this passage, what are the benefits of Christ's resurrection for believers?
2. What does “living hope” mean?
3. What is the power of hope for a troubled heart?
4. How has studying the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus increased your joy over the last few weeks?

Respond

I praise you, merciful Father, that as a part of the new life I have in Christ, you have given me a hope that will not die because it is based on Jesus' triumph over death and the grave! I've traded in an old life headed for destruction for one in which I'll enjoy the wealth of your grace for all eternity. I praise you for guarding me with your unmatched power for heaven. All of this good news brings me an abundance of joy, even though my circumstances are difficult. The temporary, uphill seasons of life profit me by refining my faith that I might bring you greater glory! I see you with eyes of faith, Jesus, at every turn in my story and I am filled with more joy than words can express! Hallelujah!

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