

BEST NEWS EVER

THE PATH TO EASTER

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BEST NEWS EVER

THE PATH TO EASTER

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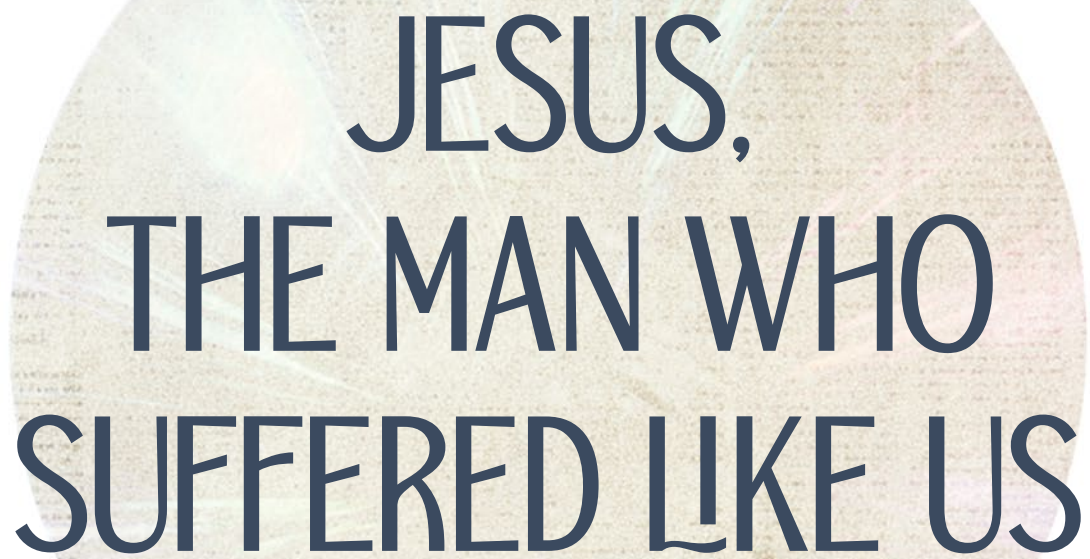
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JESUS, THE MAN WHO SUFFERED LIKE US

Sunday sermon text: Matthew 26:36-46

Then [Jesus] said to [the disciples], “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.” Matthew 26:38-39

The Gospel is good news because our God did not remain distant but became a great high priest who truly understands us. There is no suffering we face that he does not know. When the world asks, “Where is God when we hurt?” the answer is clear; He is with us.

JESUS, THE MAN WHO SUFFERED LIKE US

Day 1 - Matthew 26:36-46

In the Garden of Gethsemane

Gethsemane means “a place for pressing oil” and was located at the base of the Mount of Olives. Just as Jesus was crushed under the weight of the world’s brokenness, this location is where olives were squeezed by heavy rock slabs to bring oil forth from the olive pulp.

Reflect

1. How is the humanity of Jesus displayed in this passage?
2. What strikes you about Jesus’ posture toward the Father in the midst of his torment?
3. In what way is this interaction between Jesus and the Father the antithesis of what Satan tempts Jesus with in Matthew 4:8-9?
4. Have you ever felt like your soul was being swallowed up in sorrow? If so, when?

Respond

Allow yourself to be quiet before the Lord for several minutes. Ask him if there are any places of grief that you need to honestly bring before him in prayer. Pour out your heart before your compassionate God. (Ps. 62:8)

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Day 2 - Isaiah 53

The Suffering Servant

Anthropomorphic language is used throughout the Scriptures as a method of conveying eternal characteristics of God in a way that humans can grasp. For example, in today's passage Isaiah speaks of the "arm of the Lord," but he is Spirit and does not have a body. The way God made our bodies, however, can help us understand his character and work in the world.

Reflect

1. After reading verse 1, take note of how "the arm of the Lord" is used in the verses below. What do you think it means?

Exodus 6:6 -

Jeremiah 32:17 -

Isaiah 33:2 -

2. Read through the chapter slowly. Make note of how Isaiah describes the Messiah...

Physically? Relationally? Emotionally?

4. Using verses 4-6, fill out the chart below.

Jesus received/carried	We received

4. Describe the comfort it brings you to meditate on Jesus' experience of the world's brokenness.

Respond

What are some of the sorrows, griefs, or afflictions you're currently facing? Write a prayer thanking Jesus that he understands your pain.

JESUS, THE MAN WHO SUFFERED LIKE US

Day 3 - Psalm 75

The Cup

Reflect

1. Who is speaking in verses 2-5 and what is being communicated?
2. What is the metaphor the Psalmist uses in verse 8? Look at the following verses to help determine the meaning of the metaphor.

Isaiah 51:17
Jeremiah 25:15-16
3. Do believers need to be concerned about receiving God's wrath? What about unbelievers? See Romans 8:1 and John 3:36.
4. How does reading Psalm 75 enhance your understanding of Jesus' conversation with the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane?

Respond

Write a prayer thanking Jesus for drinking the cup of God's wrath - that you rightly deserved - down to the dregs, so that you might be offered the cup of fellowship with the Father.

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Day 4 - Hebrews 2:14-18

Made Like His Brothers in Every Way

Reflect

1. According to verse 14, why did Jesus share in flesh and blood (our humanity)?
2. What is the role of a priest? (See Hebrews 5:1 and Malachi 2:7 for help.)
3. How does Jesus becoming like us in every respect make him a merciful and faithful high priest?
4. In the last phrase of verse 17 some translations use “propitiation” while others use “atonement.” Look up a definition and write down the meaning of these words.

Respond

Bring before the Lord any worries or anxieties you have that may be rooted in a fear of death. Take time to thank Jesus for taking on humanity, with all of its frailties, and ask him to make eternal life vividly real to you.

SON OF SUFFERING

Oh the perfect Son of God
In all His innocence
Here walking in the dirt with you and me
He knows what living is
He's acquainted with our grief
A man of sorrows, Son of suffering

Oh blood and tears
How can it be
That there's a God who weeps
There's a God who bleeds
Oh praise the One
Who would reach for me
Hallelujah to the Son of suffering

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Day 5 - Hebrews 4:14-16

Our High Priest

Reflect

1. Compare today's passage with Hebrews 10:19-23 by marking them as described below.

Circle "priest" in blue.

Underline mentions of "holding fast" in purple.

Put a green parenthesis around mentions of weakness or flesh.

Underline "let us draw near" in orange.

Put a yellow box around mentions of "confidence."

Put a red squiggly line under the places that Jesus opens up for us.

Hebrews 4:4-14-16

¹⁴ 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. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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 10:19-23

¹⁹ Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.

JESUS, THE MAN WHO SUFFERED LIKE US

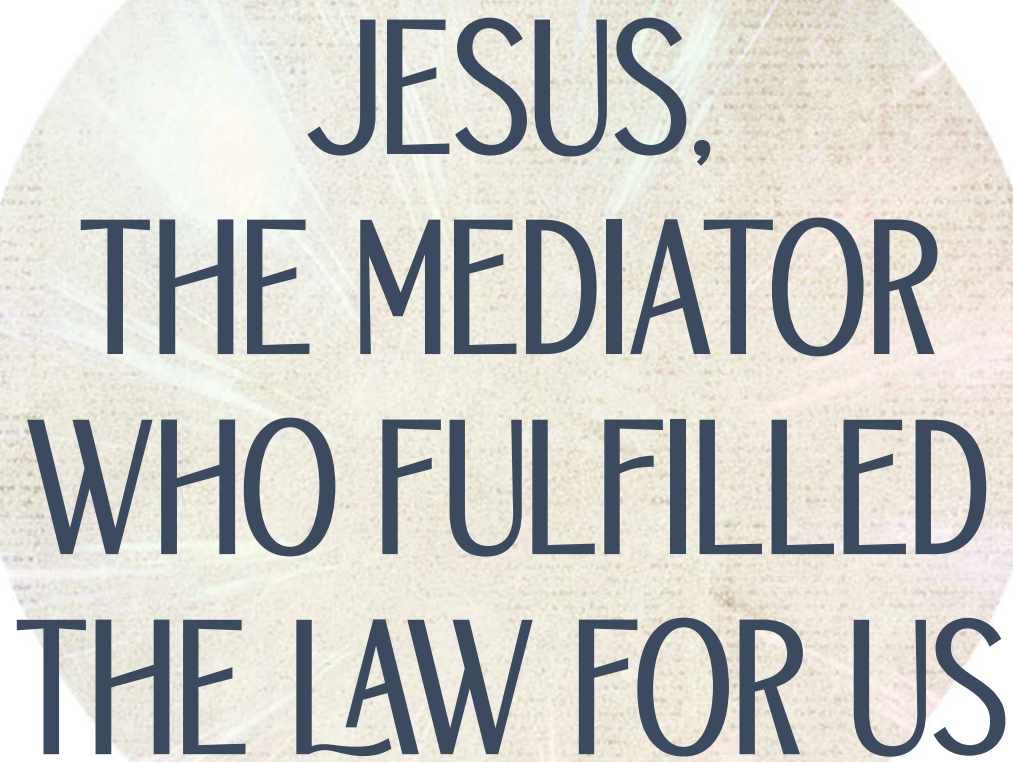
2. What stands out to you by reading and marking the similar themes in these passages side-by-side?

3. In an effort to meditate on and process the beautiful truth of this passage, take some time to consider your own weaknesses and the ways in which you are tempted. Move through each one and thank Jesus that he thoroughly and completely understands what these temptations feel like. And praise him for enduring in perfect holiness!

4. How does recognizing Jesus as our great high priest give you confidence to draw near to God even in moments of disobedience or failure or faithlessness?

Respond

Where is it today that you need the mercy and grace of God? In Christ you're invited to ask him boldly to help you!



JESUS, THE MEDIATOR WHO FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US

Sunday sermon text: Matthew 26:57-67

*Now the chief priests and the whole council were seeking false testimony against Jesus that they might put him to death, but they found none, though many false witnesses came forward. At last two came forward and said, “This man said, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to rebuild it in three days.’” And the high priest stood up and said, “Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you? But Jesus remained silent.
Matthew 26:59-63*

The gospel is the best news ever because Jesus was the meeting place of God and man and perfectly satisfied the law and all of its requirements. Jesus’ outlandish claim – “Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up” – is a window into the incredible news that the way to God has been opened for those who trust in the sufficiency of his sacrifice.

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR WHO FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US

Day 6 - Matthew 26:57-67

Jesus' Trial Before Caiaphus

Reflect

1. Before whom is this part of Jesus' trial taking place and what are they seeking to prove?
2. Ironically, the two set forth as reliable witnesses misquote Jesus. Compare the witnesses' statement in Matthew 26:61, the version reported in Mark 14:58, and Jesus' actual statement from John 2:19.

Matthew 26:61 –

Mark 14:58 –

John 2:19 –

3. Read the following verses. How do they help you understand the upheaval caused by Jesus' declaration?

What is Jesus claiming about himself?

Exodus 25:8

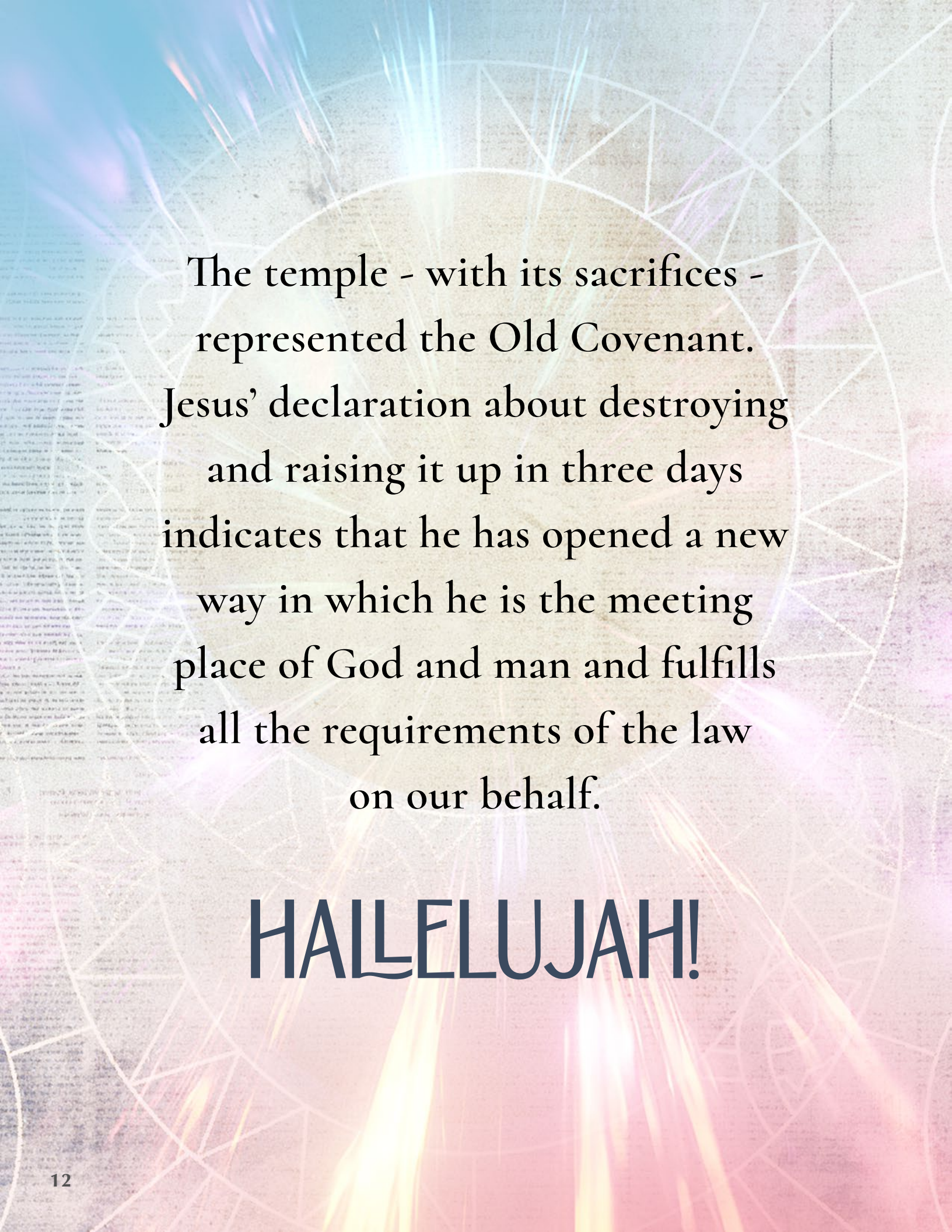
1 Kings 8:10-11

2 Chronicles 7:15-16

4. Why do you think the religious leaders were so threatened by Jesus' statement about the temple?

Respond

The temple was the place where God's people went to meet with God. Read Psalm 42:1-2. Use the words as a prayer to express your desire to draw near to him or to confess the reality of your soul's need for God's presence though you may not be aware of it.



The temple - with its sacrifices -
represented the Old Covenant.
Jesus' declaration about destroying
and raising it up in three days
indicates that he has opened a new
way in which he is the meeting
place of God and man and fulfills
all the requirements of the law
on our behalf.

HALLELUJAH!

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR WHO FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US

Day 7 - Jeremiah 31:31-34

A New Covenant

The Old Covenant was established with the Israelites as God spoke to Moses at Mt. Sinai. It was a conditional agreement that included the Ten Commandments, ceremonial laws, and the sacrificial system to temporarily manage the sin of the people.

Reflect

1. What was the heart of the Old Covenant? (Deuteronomy 30:15-18 provides a helpful summary.)
2. Why was a new covenant needed? (See Jeremiah 31:32, Romans 3:20, Galatians 3:21-22.)
3. According to Jeremiah, what will the New Covenant be like and how is it different from the Old?
4. What does this promise of a new covenant communicate about the heart of God?

Respond

Praise God for what this passage teaches you about the Lord's heart for his people!

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Day 8 - Romans 8:1-4

No Condemnation

The “law of the Spirit of life” and the “law of sin and death” refer to realms of power or authority. Praise God - in Christ we’ve experienced a transfer from the realm of sin and death to the realm of freedom and life!

Reflect

1. What is the definition of condemnation? How does it make you feel to know that this has been removed from your life in Christ?
2. What does it mean that Jesus came in the likeness of sinful flesh?
3. In Christ, God has not condemned us, but what has he condemned? And where has the condemnation taken place? Apply the definition of condemnation you wrote above to help you understand verse 3.
4. How does Paul communicate in verse 4 that God did not set aside the law in Jesus’ coming?

Respond

Do you ever feel like you’re under condemnation? If so, tell the Lord about it and confess the ways in which it’s hard to believe that you’ve met the righteous requirement of the law in Christ. Ask God to help you embrace the freedom Jesus purchased for you.

JESUS, THE MEDIATOR WHO FULFILLED THE LAW FOR US

Day 9 - Galatians 3:10-14

Christ Redeemed Us From Curse

Reflect

1. Look back at Galatians 3:2 to see the thesis question Paul is answering in this chapter. Write it below. He is essentially asking, “How did you obtain access and nearness to God?”
2. In this passage, Paul sets forth two ways to live. What are they?
3. Paul pulls together several Old Testament quotes to support his argument. Write out the verses he quotes.

Deuteronomy 27:26

Habakkuk 2:4

Leviticus 18:5

Deuteronomy 21:22-23

How do these verses help you understand what Paul is saying?

4. Curse would have been the result of living under the law. Instead, what did Christ secure for us?

Respond

Set a timer for three minutes. While taking a deep breath in, say to yourself, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law.” Breathe out and say, “by becoming a curse for us.” Repeat this several times and enjoy the space to meditate on this fantastic news. You are free from curse and a recipient of God’s blessing.

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Day 10 - Hebrews 10:1-4, 11-22

A Single Sacrifice for Sins

Reflect

1. Take note of everything you learn about the law in verses 1-4.
2. Contrast Jesus to every other priest.

Priests	Jesus

3. This is the way the New International Version translates verse 14:

“For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.”


What do the underlined verb tenses highlight to you about Christ’s work and our daily lives?

4. The invitation to “draw near” in verse 22 stands in sharp contrast to the temple system with different courts and curtains that only allowed certain people to gain incremental access to God’s presence through sacrifices and ceremonial washing. What would it look like for you to draw near to and enjoy God’s presence ... even right now?

Respond

Take a few minutes to worship in response to this magnificent truth by listening to “Thank You Jesus for the Blood” by Charity Gayle.





JESUS, THE MESSIAH WHO SAVED US

Sunday sermon text: Luke 23:32-33; 39-43

And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 23:42-43

The gospel is the best news ever because Jesus’ work on the cross still saves us. Though his death – and the way of suffering - looks like folly to some, it is the very power of God to deliver us from sin.

THE BEST NEWS EVER – THE PATH TO EASTER

Day 11 - Luke 23:32-33, 39-43

Two Attitudes Towards Grace

Reflect

1. Using as much detail as you can, list what the criminals have in common. How are they different?
2. What is the irony of the first criminal's mocking words to Jesus – "Save yourself and us"? What if Jesus would have taken his advice?
3. What do the second criminal's words communicate about his beliefs regarding Jesus?
4. What does Jesus' response say about salvation?

Respond

Where in your own life are you like the first criminal – slow to receive grace? In what area(s) are you hesitant to see your own spiritual poverty and draw deeply on the mercy of God? Receive the blood-bought grace of God anew today.

JESUS, THE MESSIAH WHO SAVED US

Day 12 - Matthew 9:9-13

I Desire Mercy, Not Sacrifice

Reflect

1. Why was Jesus' association with tax collectors and other sinners so upsetting to the religious leaders?
2. What kind of people does Jesus call to follow him?
3. In his response to the religious leaders Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6. Write this Old Testament reference out below. What is Jesus communicating by including this statement?
4. What does this passage communicate about the heart of God?

Respond

There is glorious freedom in realizing that God is drawn toward our neediness rather than repulsed by it. He moves toward our brokenness with his steadfast love to save those in need of rescue. Where do you need him acutely today? It would be God's delight to move toward you with his saving power and presence!

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Day 13 - 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

Two Views of The Cross

Reflect

1. Who are the two groups of people set forth in verse 18 and how does each one view the cross? Who are the two groups of people mentioned in verse 23 and how does each one view Paul's proclamation of Christ crucified?
2. What kinds of worldly wisdom in today's culture view the cross as foolishness?
3. Why do you think the best news ever – the message of grace given through a crucified Christ – is difficult for some to receive?
4. How has the grace of God displayed in Jesus' death on your behalf become the power and wisdom of God in your life (v. 24)?

Respond

Paul ends this discussion (in verse 30) by declaring that for Christians Jesus became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that we would boast in the Lord. In other words, our view of grace removes boasting in ourselves because we're clear about our sinfulness, the necessity of the cross, and Christ's sufficiency. Come to the Lord with humility and praise for his beautiful plan to save you!

JESUS, THE MESSIAH WHO SAVED US

Day 14 - Titus 3:3-7

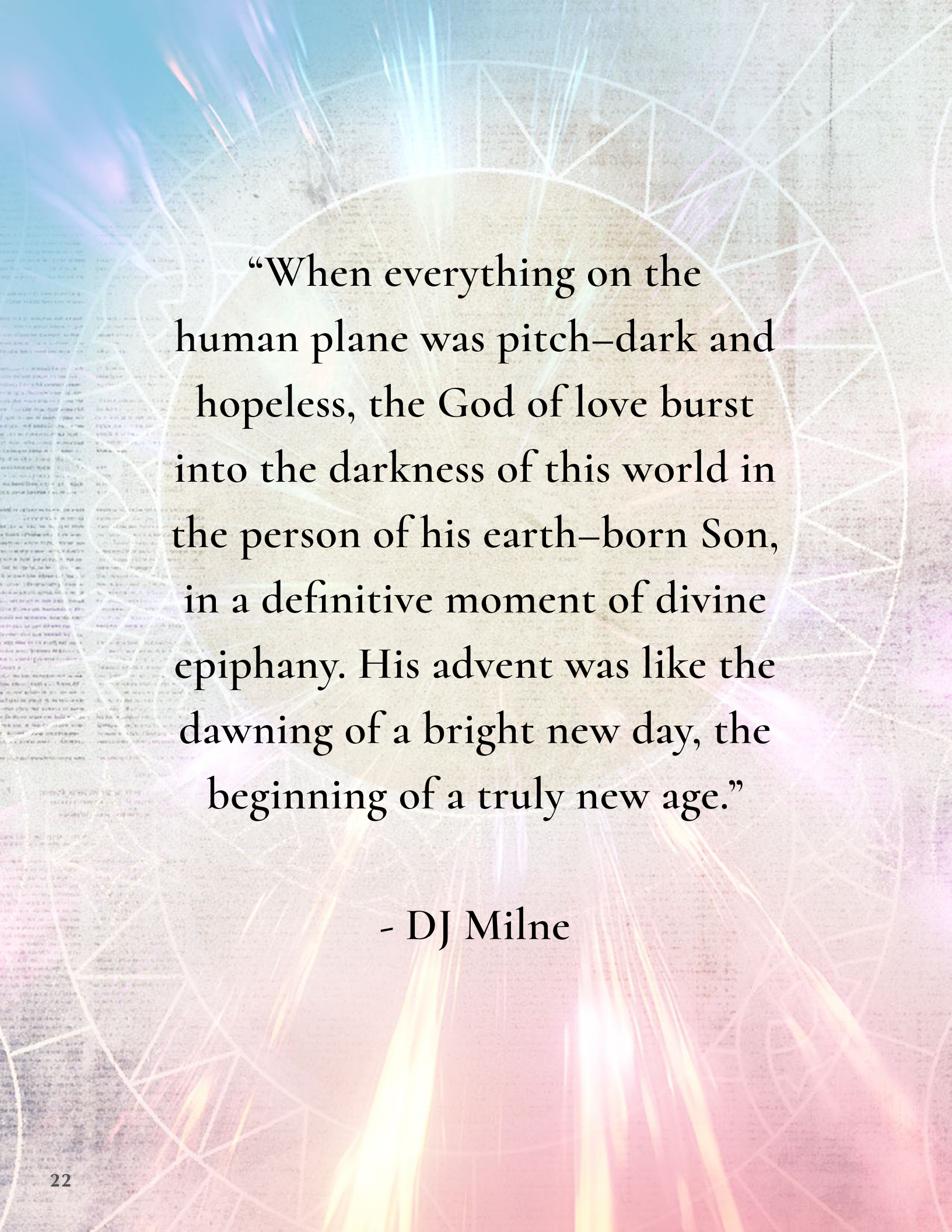
He Saved Us

Reflect

1. What was the bad news of our former condition? In what ways did this state render us unable to save ourselves?
2. The word “appeared” in verse 4 is translated from the Greek word “epiphaino,” which means to shine upon. Write out the following verses where this word also occurs. How does this definition and other occurrences help you understand the meaning of verse 4?
Numbers 6:25 -
Psalm 80:3 -
Luke 1:78-79 -
3. Write verse 5 below from the New Living Translation and let its truth sink in!
4. Fill in the blanks of this quote from John Stott (a British pastor and theologian) with the four attributes of his character listed in this passage that God brought to bear in the face of our dire need for salvation.
“Thus salvation originated in the heart of God. It is because of his _____ (v. 4), _____ (v. 4), _____ (v. 5) and _____ (v. 7) that he intervened on our behalf; he took the initiative, he came after us, and he rescued us from our hopeless predicament.”

Respond

Paul uses vivid language in this passage to convey the glorious truth of the gospel. Meditate on God’s goodness and loving kindness showing up in your life like a sunrise when you were foolish and disobedient. Take a few minutes to envision the Holy Spirit being poured out generously on your life. Tell the Lord how these images enhance your understanding of the salvation you have in Christ.



“When everything on the human plane was pitch–dark and hopeless, the God of love burst into the darkness of this world in the person of his earth–born Son, in a definitive moment of divine epiphany. His advent was like the dawning of a bright new day, the beginning of a truly new age.”

- DJ Milne

JESUS, THE MESSIAH WHO SAVED US

Day 15 - 1 Peter 2:22-25

By His Wounds You Have Been Healed


Reflect

1. How did Jesus respond to the unjust persecution and suffering he faced?
2. Note how Peter connects Jesus to the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 (which we studied on Day 2). Pay particular attention to Isaiah 53:4-7. What additional details does Peter communicate about Jesus as the fulfillment of that prophecy?
3. How is it that Jesus' wounds (the very opposite of healing) bring healing for us?
4. What kind of life does Jesus make possible for us by bearing our sin (v. 24)?

Respond

Take a few minutes to worship the Shepherd and Overseer of your soul by listening to the song, "Jesus Paid It All."





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