

CELEBRATE

EASTER

DAILY DEVOTIONAL



PARK HILL
Baptist Church



Introduction

As we look forward to Easter, I hope you'll take the opportunity to use these daily devotionals to focus your attention on the hope we have in Christ. Several of our church members have written a personal thought or reflection, and I'm grateful to each person who participated.

Our prayer is that these devotionals will strengthen your observation of this holy season – and deepen your sense of connection to our church family too.

Blessings,
Garrick

Put on Compassionate Hearts

Monday, April 7

To be Christlike is to be compassionate. God, through the Scriptures, calls us to live out our faith by showing kindness and love to others. This does not always come naturally to us. Paul reminds us of this in Colossians 3:12 when he says, “Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience.” These characteristics should be so obvious in how we live our lives that they become like the clothes we wear. Sometimes, we take everyday kindness for granted, but even the smallest acts can have a huge impact on the lives of those around us.

God made this clear to me recently in an unexpected way. One day in one of my classes, I told a friend that I was always happy when I saw him. I thought nothing of the interaction, but I found out later that the Holy Spirit used that simple compliment in a big way. My friend texted me the following weekend, saying that he was planning on taking his own life, but my words of encouragement caused him to reconsider. He told me how thankful he was that God placed me in his life when he was struggling. This situation has caused me to realize the importance of showing kindness to others, because you can never underestimate how the Holy Spirit will use our actions to impact those around us. I’m grateful that my friend is still in my life, and I’m thankful that God allows us to take part in His work by showing compassion to others.

Over the next two weeks, notice the people around you, and realize that inviting them to know Jesus is the ultimate act of compassion.

JD Smith
jd007smith@icloud.com

Jesus Is for Everyone

Tuesday, April 8

When I was a kid, I remember focusing a lot of time and attention on Christmas – but not as much on Easter. It wasn't until I got older that I realized the real significance of this holy season – specifically that without the resurrection of Jesus, his birth would have been pretty pointless.

From the very beginning, God had a purpose and a plan that only His Son could accomplish. Back in 2020 I had the privilege of leading a study tour of Israel, which is one of my favorite aspects of my ministry. I'm absolutely fascinated by the diversity and culture of the Jewish people. And if I'm honest, sometimes I forget that Jesus was Jewish too. Even though I'd been there before, I must admit that it wasn't retracing the steps of Jesus on the Via Dolorosa that most resonated with me.

You see, people-watching is one of my favorite pastimes. So one night I ventured out of Old City Jerusalem and took in the more modern part of the city, with its bustling shopping district, wide array of restaurants and coffee shops, and street performers. Among my most interesting finds was JFC – Jerusalem Fried Chicken. These things, while amusing in a certain sense, remind me of a fundamental truth: we are more alike than we are different. Israel is a melting pot unlike any other, with not only many sects of Jewish people, both religious and secular, but also

a vast Arab population as well. And despite what we see and hear in the news on an almost daily basis, the reality is that most of these people manage to peacefully coexist.

For every pair of eyes I encountered on my evening escapade, I couldn't help thinking, "Jesus came for them too." As we pause over the next couple weeks to remember the suffering and sacrifice of Christ, may we also celebrate the hope and promise of eternal life that His resurrection brings to all who believe.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him." - John 3:16-17 NIV

Garrick D. Conner
Discipleship Pastor
gconner@parkhillbaptist.org

Triumph Over Death

Wednesday, April 9

Easter is a time when Christian believers around the world celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It signifies the ultimate victory over sin and death, granting eternal life to all who believe. Central to this celebration is the powerful scripture found in 1 Corinthians 15:55: "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" This verse totally captures the essence of Easter, reminding us of the hope and triumph that the resurrection brings.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the church at Corinth, he addressed several issues in the early church. Chapter 15 specifically deals with the resurrection of the dead, affirming the reality and importance of Christ's resurrection as the cornerstone of Christian faith. In verses 55 and following, Paul quotes loosely Hosea 13:14 to emphasize the defeat of death through Jesus Christ. This rhetorical question highlights the powerless state of death in the face of Christ's resurrection.

Every civilization has viewed death as the ultimate end, a source of sorrow and fear. However, the resurrection of Jesus changes everything. By rising from the dead, Jesus conquered the grave, rendering death powerless. By asking the questions "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?", Paul underscores this monumental victory.

Death no longer has the final say! Christ has defeated death!

The resurrection of Jesus is not just a historical event, but a transformative power that impacts the lives of all Christians today. It assures us that just as Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be raised to eternal life. The assurance of the resurrection provides comfort in times of loss and empowers us to live boldly for Christ.

Understanding the significance of the resurrection changes everything including how we live our daily lives. It calls us to live with hope, courage, and purpose. Knowing that death has been defeated, we can face life's challenges with confidence, knowing that our ultimate destiny is secure in Christ. The resurrection also compels us to share this message of hope with others, spreading the good news of Jesus' victory over death.

Easter is a celebration of life, hope, and victory. The resurrection of Jesus Christ has forever changed the course of history, offering a promise of eternal life to all who believe. Are we living in the freedom and joy that the resurrection offers? Let this Easter be a time of renewed commitment to live out the resurrection power in every aspect of our lives.

Cody Partridge
codypartridge2010@yahoo.com

Jesus Prayed for Us

Thursday, April 10

As we lead up to Easter and reflect on the moments leading to the cross, I'm drawn to the scene after the last Supper, where Jesus and the disciples go to the Garden of Gethsemane. This is recorded in all four gospels. Jesus withdrew to the garden to pray, fully aware of the impending events that lay ahead. In this quiet moment of prayer with the Father, He willingly embraced the path laid out before Him. When He goes back to check on the disciples, He encourages them to pray because He knows that without prayer and the connection it gives us, we are weak and cannot follow God's path that He has for us.

One of my favorite tellings of this is in John 17:20 – 23. “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one – I in them and you in me – so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”

In that prayer, Jesus prayed for me and you. Pause for a moment and let that sink in. He prayed with you in mind. Even as He faced the weight of the

cross and all that would unfold, His heart was turned toward us, towards you.

He is praying for the unity of all believers so that we will have a real relationship rooted in Him, so that the world may see His love reflected in our lives, so that they may know and experience His love.

So, as we get closer to the Cross, take a moment and think about the fact that Jesus supports you and your walk in prayer. Spend time thanking Him for the love he has for you. May Jesus's prayer be our prayer for others so that they may grow deeper in their understanding and relationship with Jesus this week and be brought into complete unity with God and each other as they look toward the Cross.

Amy Laden
amygladen@me.com

New Life in Christ

Friday, April 11

Romans 6:8-11

⁸"Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with Him."

- Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, we have been freed from sin. If we accept this gift, we can walk in the newness of life.

⁹"We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over Him."

- Christ Jesus is forever VICTORIOUS! Jesus represents eternal life that is ours through faith in Him.

¹⁰"For the death He died He died to sin, once for all, but the life He lives He lives to God."

- Jesus' death broke the sin that enslaved us. The resurrection completes our atonement and is the basis for our salvation. Resurrection is the hope we celebrate this Easter—and every day!

¹¹"So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus."

- Christians must die to self and embrace our Savior and Lord in our pursuit of a victorious

Christian walk. We are more alive than ever because of Him! Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has freed us from the bondage of sin, offering us new life in Him

Because He has conquered death once and for all, we have the assurance of eternal life through faith in Him. His sacrifice broke sin's hold on us, and His resurrection secures our salvation. As believers, we are called to die to sin and live fully for God, walking in the victory Christ has won for us.

This Easter, we celebrate not only His resurrection but also our own new life in Him!

Pam Mantooth
pimantooth@gmail.com

We Are to Remember Easter Sunday

Saturday, April 12

For many people Easter Sunday is a day to dress our children in fancy dresses and hair bows for girls and handsome little suits for boys.

Oh yes; in yesteryear, Mom wore a fancy hat, the bigger the better. The afternoon was prime time for a colorful Easter egg hunt.

Pity the family who either forgot or never knew that Easter is a beloved day for *remembering*.

We are to *remember* that almighty God had a purpose for his son, Jesus Christ. We are to *remember* that each of us was born with a sin nature we didn't ask for, nor could we tame it alone. We are to *remember* God had a unique plan for our sin issue. The lamb of God (Jesus) would die on a cross prepared for sinners.

But God would not leave him on that cruel cross. He was buried in a tomb. We are to *remember* God was not finished yet. Resurrection Day was only three days away.

“Up from the grave he AROSE, with a mighty triumph over his foes; he lives forever with his saints to reign.”

We are to REMEMBER to give thanks for the love of God that came to us that Resurrection Easter Day. We are to *remember* to turn our eyes upon Jesus, look fully in His face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His Glory and Grace.

JoAnn Martin
martinjoann1938@gmail.com

Palm Sunday Devotional

Sunday, April 13

Palm Sunday. The first day of Holy Week. One of the last joyful days of Jesus' earthly life leading up to His crucifixion. If you've grown up in church like me, you've heard the story. Jesus sends two of His disciples to go into a village near Bethany to acquire a donkey which He plans to ride on the road toward the Mount of Olives. This isn't a spur of the moment decision on the part of Jesus; it's a fulfillment of prophecy from the Old Testament book of Zechariah.

The books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record this story, and, in each account, Jesus prepares His disciples on how to respond if anyone inquires as to why the donkey is being taken. Luke's account tells us that none other than the donkey's owners ask the disciples why they are taking away their animal. The disciples' simple reply of "The Lord needs it" is enough for the owners to joyfully oblige. You know what happens next. Jesus rides on the donkey to the tune of countless followers shouting "Hosanna" and loudly praising Him as their Lord.

But have you ever stopped to think about the faith of the donkey's owners? We don't know if they had ever met Jesus. Knowing that He spent a significant portion of His ministry in the vicinity of Bethany, we can assume that they had at least heard of Him. What strikes me, however, is their instant agreement to let go of one of their most valuable

assets to serve the Lord. Scripture doesn't say that the disciples even assure them that their donkey will be returned. The owners, however, don't demand answers to all of their questions. Simply knowing that the Lord needs their resource is enough for them to happily let it go.

We don't know the owners' names. We don't know their stories. Truth be told, they play a very minor role in the overall story of Scripture. But, their trust and faith-filled obedience leads to one of the most powerful events in the days leading up to Jesus' ultimate sacrifice. You might not think you're called to play a big part in building God's Kingdom. However, you have resources that, in the hands of God, can be used in greater ways than you could ever imagine. Will you trust Him with your resources today?

Jeremy Briggs
Student Pastor
jbriggs@parkhillbaptist.org

Acknowledging Mixed Emotions

Monday, April 14

“I have learned that I can simultaneously hold grief in one hand and joy in the other. I don’t have to choose.”

I was sitting in a coffee shop when my friend told me what God had been teaching her through a particularly heavy season of life. She had been through some incredible moments of pain and loss, and yet she was experiencing some of God’s greatest blessings elsewhere. It was a roller-coaster of emotions, and she was learning to embrace the ride.

Throughout our lives, we will also face such bittersweet times.

- In one hand, you can ache as your child launches into a new, more independent phase of life and in the other, be so thrilled to see them pursuing dreams and experiencing success.
- You can mourn losing a loved one to a terrible illness and also be relieved that they no longer suffer on this earth with their failing body.
- You can celebrate a new job while dreading the good-byes that come with your departure.

As we look to the Easter season, we see this dichotomy of emotions played out through the death and resurrection of Jesus. On one hand, we have Friday – a day of betrayal, beatings, death, and dark-

ness, and on the other hand we have Sunday – a day of victory, celebration, life, and joy. Our inclination is to focus on the pleasant – the triumph of the resurrection. Yet we need the sorrow of the crucifixion to fully experience and appreciate the power of the resurrection.

My challenge to you this Easter season is to fully embrace both sides. Sit in the gravity of Christ's sufferings and death. Acknowledge the sins that placed Him there. Grieve the brokenness of this world. And then celebrate Christ's victory over sin. Appreciate His love for sinners. Rejoice in the hope of Christ's return.

“But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on Him, and by His wounds we are healed.”
Isaiah 53:5

Michelle Conner
ms.michelle22@gmail.com

Up From the Grave

Tuesday, April 15

I grew up in Oklahoma City. There was just Momma, Daddy, younger brother David, and me. All the extended family lived halfway across the United States in western North Carolina. I have often wondered how my mom managed to raise a family without the support network of family. Momma was the spiritual leader of our home. She faithfully made sure that my brother and I went to church on Sunday. This meant getting dressed in our Sunday finest and walking several blocks to the local Baptist church.

Momma loved singing hymns; I remember her deep alto voice singing praises to the Lord. I especially remember an Easter Hymn “Christ Arose,” an old hymn written in the 1800s.

The song starts very somber:

Low in the grave he lay, Jesus my Savior! Waiting the coming day, Jesus my Lord!

The Refrain, however, is much more joyous and sung with enthusiasm:

Up from the grave He arose, with a mighty triumph
o'er His foes, He arose a Victor from the dark do-
main and He lives forever with His saints to reign, He
arose! He arose! Hallelujah! Christ arose!

What a wonderful memory hearing Momma's voice singing praises on Easter morning. Through her constant faithful witness, my Daddy became

a Christian in his early 40s. My brother and I were saved as teenagers. And I have the assurance of knowing that one day we will all be singing in the heavenly choir...

Hallelujah! Christ arose!

Diane Powers
diane.powers07@yahoo.com

Longing for Heaven

Wednesday, April 16

The disciples were troubled. Jesus shared He would be leaving them and predicted that Peter would deny Him. He also declared they could not follow Him to where He was going. (John 13:31-38) It is understandable why the disciples would be so anxious. They had just experienced the Last Supper with Jesus, where He washed their feet. The disciples still clung to the hope that Jesus would be their earthly king and bring peace to their chaotic world.

If we are being honest, we will admit that the current state of our world longs for Jesus to return and set things right as our earthly king. Sickness, death, strained relationships, and other troubling circumstances can leave us in despair, wondering when things will get better. But Jesus has a better plan in mind. He promised the disciples in John 14:2-3, “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

One glorious reality of Jesus Christ's death, burial, and resurrection is that He is keeping His promise of preparing a place for us in heaven. Whether we meet Jesus face to face as a result of our natural death or His return, we can be assured that the place He will welcome us into will meet our

needs and provide the rest, peace, and security we crave in our earthly lives. However, Jesus is the only way to heaven. (John 14:6) Have you placed your trust in Him?

Jennifer Booth
jenniferbooth@me.com

Jesus Said Her Name

Thursday, April 17

The women who followed Jesus appear at the tomb in all four New Testament Gospels. They arrived early in the morning on the third day while it was still dark.

John tells of Mary Magdalene's very personal and powerful encounter with Jesus.
John 20: 10-18

After the others left, Mary Magdalene lingered at the tomb. She was distraught. She had questions. Not only had her beloved Teacher been killed on Friday, but now His body was missing. As she turned to leave, Jesus was near. He did not say, "Pull yourself together!" even though she mistakenly thought He was the gardener. He acknowledged her tears. He called her by her name. "Mary." At that moment she realized it was Jesus.

As followers of Jesus today, we sometimes don't recognize Him because our chaos is too loud, or our pain is too severe. We do not expect Him to come to us in such times. But then we hear our name - and know that He is with us. We can turn to Him just as confused or crushed or skeptical as even his closest followers were on that early Resurrection morning.

Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus did not end at the empty tomb. He helped her move forward when He said "Go to my brothers and tell them." Then Mary went and announced to the disciples, "I have seen the Lord!"

What does it mean for us present day Jesus-followers to live after the Resurrection? Author Anne Lamott says the Monday after Easter is "not the day to hit the snooze button!" It is the time to go into our world, around the globe or down the street, and remind someone that Jesus rose from the tomb, that He knows their name, and that He might show up in unexpected places.

Diane Parker
dianeparker550@gmail.com

The Power of the Blood

Friday, April 18

Easter is meaningless without Good Friday. Without the shedding of blood resulting in the death of one who is totally innocent, the sins of man would not be covered and eternal life would not be accessible to man.

But there was shed blood! Think of the High Priest of the nation of Israel who, on Yom Kippur, took the blood of a bull into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood on the top of the Ark of the Covenant. This blood covered the law which was in the Ark, the law which had been broken through sin. The Jewish belief was that as God looked down, He didn't see the broken law because it was covered by the blood.

At the cross, Jesus shed His blood. This blood acts as a covering of sins for those who accept the salvation offered by God by placing faith in Jesus' shed blood as payment for their personal sins and in His resurrection as overcoming death therein leading to eternal life.

Good Friday is a day we celebrate as "good" only because we know that it is the last rung in the ladder that leads to the third day, Easter, when He arose. When the disciples and Mary went to the garden tomb, Jesus' body was not there. But after the disciples left, He appeared to Mary. His resurrection

was confirmed by Mary and later others. Today, we know of this confirmation of resurrection through the written word, the Bible, which leads us to Him as Savior.

There is no celebration in the Christian faith greater than Easter, the confirmation of the covering of the sins of mankind and the provision of eternal life. A day of the highest praise, a Christian Yom Kippur!!

Mike Haigh
mike.haigh3333@gmail.com

Courageously Accepting Our Call

Saturday, April 19

Let us be bold, unapologetic and unwavering to declare our Lord, Jesus Christ as the one true and living God!

We find in Matthew 28, Jewish leaders discredited the resurrection as a conspiracy, claiming disciples stole Jesus' crucified body. If this were all just a contrived scheme, would all these men face torture and execution to defend a known lie? Peter declares:

“For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.” 2 Peter 1:16

What about how we present our faith to the world? Should we be timid? Or would our reticence or perceived insecurity benefit those who would see our commission fail? Let it not be so! Let us imitate Paul as he imitates Christ:

“My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.” Philippians 1:20

What is a greater display of faith than to be steadfast in courage and devotion through persecution? The bravery of early Christians is what Justin

Martyr (130 AD) attributes as the impulse of his conversion.

“For though we are beheaded, and crucified, and exposed to beasts and chains and fire and all other forms of torture, it is plain that we do not forsake the confession of our faith, but the more things of this kind happen to us so much the more are there many others who become believers and truly religious through the name of Jesus.”

If we are hesitant, let us be emboldened by the courage of the early church who, in the face of mockery, persecution and torture, proclaimed the resurrection with unshakable assurance in the hope of Jesus Christ!

Clay Bradford
claybradford88@gmail.com



Easter Sunday

April 20

³Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

1 Peter 1:3-4a NIV

He is risen! He is risen indeed!

Thanks to the gift of God's grace, we who are in Christ have been included in the gift of the new and eternal life provided by Jesus Christ. In the resurrection of Jesus we have been included in the sonship of Christ, included in his inheritance for all of eternity.

As we reflect on the meaning of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let us stop and give God thanks for our inclusion into this unfading hope, this gift that can only be accepted by faith in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer:

Lord Jesus Christ, I thank you with all that I am for the love you have shown to me through your sacrifice on the cross and through your triumph over the grave. Your mercy is beyond my understanding but I receive it by faith. I am thrilled to be yours for eternity.

Ryan Laden
Senior Pastor
rladen@parkhillbaptist.org

Easter Schedule

April 13 • Palm Sunday • 11:00 a.m. (9:30 a.m. Sunday School)

April 18 • Good Friday • 6:00 p.m.

April 20 • Easter Sunday • 9:00 & 11:00 a.m. (no Sunday School)

Online Devotions

Visit parkillbaptist.org/devos to view the daily devotions online. We will also be sharing them each day on our Facebook page.



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