



CALLED TO CHRIST

*a 40 day Prayer and Fasting Journey
Revealing the Wisdom and Power of God*

By Traci A. Alexander

***“For I have resolved to know nothing
while I was with you except
Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”
(1 Corinthians 2:2)***

CRUCIFIED

Day 1

Raise Up A Standard

***To the Church, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy,
together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our
Lord Jesus Christ – their Lord and ours:***

***Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ –
(1 Corinthians 1:2-3)***

This journey was originally written to correspond with the season of Lent 2011, which provided us once again with an open door to join together and embark on another new and exciting 40 day prayer and fasting journey as we walked towards the glorious celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Each year we pause to reflect on the extraordinary gift we have received through the great sacrifice of our Savior who offered His life as a ransom for our sins and paved the way with His blood for us to experience life eternal with our Heavenly Father. This extraordinary act and utmost expression of love towards mankind is the foundation of our faith as Christians and the message we should humbly, obediently, and boldly carry with us each and every day of our lives. Though it may not be Lent when you pick up this devotional book, you are invited and encouraged to partake of this journey whenever the Lord has led you to do so. I pray that in these next 40...well, 47 days as it turns out (the Lord wasn't quite finished with us this time!), you will encounter Jesus as you have never experienced Him before and find yourself as resolute as the apostle Paul was in his commitment to Christ – not to the cause of Christ – but to the person of Christ. The call of Christ is to a life of devotion to Him, not to a life of working for Him. May this journey to the cross lead you into deeper fellowship with the Lord and renew your commitment to His message being the priority focus of your life.

***“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert,
so the Son of Man must be lifted up,
that everyone who believes in Him
may have eternal life.”
(John 3:14-15)***

With one humble, painful, sacrificial act, Jesus set the standard by which all mankind would be judged. The cross, a symbol of judgment exercised against hardened criminals effected to hinder others from breaking the law, would become the banner through which the Lord would provide the pathway for sinners to experience His mercy, grace, and forgiveness.

***“But I, when I am lifted up from the earth,
will draw all men to Myself.”
(John 12:32)***

Throughout the Scriptures we read that banners were “the troop standards around which the units rallied”. A pole with a banner was set on a hill as a signal for the troops to prepare for battle and to lead them into action, or to call the troops to return home. The twelve tribes of Israel had their own standard identifying each family unit to march under as the camp moved from place to place (reference Numbers 2:2). As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ and children of the Living God, the standard we march under is the cross of Jesus Christ. It is the banner that called us to Christ and it is the standard we are to uphold to lead others to experience that same victory we have already received.

***“In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner
for all peoples; the nations will rally to Him,
and His place of rest will be glorious.”***

(Isaiah 11:10)

In the eyes of the unbelieving world, the cross would only be seen as a tragic defeat rather than victorious result of a well planned and purposed military strategy. God's ways are not our ways, His ways are higher and are marked by the supreme standard of His love. He uses the seemingly foolish, weak, lowly and despised things by human standards to reveal the greatness of His wisdom and power (reference 1 Corinthians 1:27-29). In the face of weakness He displayed His greatest triumph. It is in weakness that we find our strength (reference 2 Corinthians 12:9-10). It is through surrender we find success. It is through, and by, the love of God that we ultimately experience the life we were meant to live (reference John 10:10).

***“For the message of the cross is foolishness
to those who are perishing,
but to us who are being saved
it is the power of God.”
(1 Corinthians 1:18)***

All the power we need to walk, live, and face the battles in this life are rooted in the cross of Jesus Christ. *“Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”* (1 Corinthians 1:24). But instead of accessing and utilizing this divine power given through the Holy Spirit we often rest in our own strength and human understanding. We have found ourselves wasting more and more time reacting and responding to the world's ignorance and putting out fires, rather than proactively filling ourselves through God's Word with godly wisdom and understanding and setting the world on fire for Christ.

The Lord's love for us is displayed like a great military banner set on a hill for all the world to see. ***“His banner over me is love”*** (Song of Songs 2:4b). But instead of leading the charge and pointing others to Christ we have become an obstacle in their path because we ourselves have neglected to put on the mind of Christ and seek after knowledge and understanding of Him and His will. God's highest priority for us is intimacy with Him. His greatest desire is that we would know Him. His cross stands as a beacon of love beckoning us to Him, but we have forgotten how priceless His gift is, how great a price He paid, how far He was willing to go to draw us to Himself. We have lost sight of our purpose, we have neglected our calling; we must repent, for the Kingdom of God is near (Matthew 3:2)!

***“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you
except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”
(1 Corinthians 2:2)***

The apostle Paul knew the power of the cross and as a result the focus of his life and teaching became about nothing else but preaching Christ and Him crucified. His sole desire was to know Christ and make Him known. He knew firsthand the transforming and saving work of the cross. We, too, are ambassadors for Christ, having experienced His redemptive and transforming power at work in our own lives; and Paul's proclamation should be our own. His calling was not to a cause, but to a person – the person of Jesus Christ. These next 40 days provide a divine opportunity to change our perspective and to fix our eyes on Jesus. To get our eyes off of our own individual circumstances (and our own little kingdoms) and turn our attention towards our King and His Kingdom!

In preparation for this journey recognize that only God and our knowledge and love for Him is worthwhile, and the time and attention we give to nurturing our relationship with our Lord alone will yield extraordinary spiritual blessings and fruit. The season of Lent is traditionally a time for penitence and sacrifice, however, there is nothing we have to offer that God needs; but what He does desire most of all is us! ***“To obey is better than sacrifice”*** (1 Samuel 15:22b). Our desire to set aside our busy schedules to spend time with Him, in His Word and in worship and prayer, brings Him the greatest pleasure. The degree to which the servants of God are

willing to surrender our time and attention to spend time with the Lord and seek His wisdom and counsel would result in a radical shift in the outcome of this spiritual war – victory is assured when we rest in the Lord (Psalm 46:10)!

May we respond to the standard that has been raised by Jesus Christ as we walk these next 40 days!

1. Pray. Take time today to prepare your heart for these next 40 days. This journey is not meant to be solely a fast, but, more importantly, a feast, as our focus will be completely on our First Love – the Lord Jesus Christ! His desire is for us to know Him and this journey will lead us into the depths of who He is and what He has done for us. Prepare your heart to receive what He has prepared especially for you.

***“I have treasured the words of His mouth
more than my daily bread.” (Job 23:12b)***

2. Fast. As you pray and seek the Lord He may direct you to offer a sacrifice of your food – offering a sacrifice of food puts us in a place of greater dependence upon the Lord and allows us to experience greater clarity in our hearing and understanding. Taking this step of faith will yield far greater rewards than what you ever had to give up. Be careful not to get distracted by the legalism of the physical food you may not be eating and pay more attention the spiritual food the Lord is nourishing you with each day of this journey. His desire is to empty you of all that is unhealthy, unholy, unnecessary and fill you instead with His more or Him – His holiness, goodness, righteousness, and glory.

3. Ask the Lord to reveal to you those areas of your life that have dampened or are currently hindering you from experiencing the deep, abiding, intimate relationship He desires you to have with Him. We all have experienced a lull in our fervor and passionate pursuit of the Lord at different times and seasons in our walk. His desire is that appetite for Him be restored. Confess areas of busyness, laziness, conflict, weakness, unforgiveness, sin, disobedience, rebellion, and other areas that are keeping you from spending time in His Word and prayer each and every day. Repent that you have put anything or anyone ahead of Him; especially sinful behaviors and activities that are disrupting your relationship with the Lord altogether. The closer we walk with the Lord – the closer we get to His holiness – the more aware we become of those things that are not worthy of Him. It's time to rid ourselves of anything that is not of Christ!

4. Prepare a 3-ring notebook and prayer journal for this journey. This is an in-depth devotional journey and you will find that printing out the devotionals each day (instead of reading them on your computer or phone) and placing them with your Bible and a notebook will make it easier to read and meditate upon. Take time to dig deeper as the Lord leads. This is about your personal journey with the Lord and what He wants to reveal to you about Himself and His plans and purpose for your life and ministry. Record all that He shows you – Scriptures, prayers, people. Journaling is an important part of these journeys as the Lord leads you further down the path He has planned for you.

5. Put on your Spiritual Armor. The Lord blesses those who seek Him, but the enemy can't stand it when we do. The more we seek the Lord the stronger we become, but the more intensified the enemy's efforts are against us. Be prepared for daily attacks that are directed at keeping you from spending intimate time with the Lord in His Word and prayer. Be vigilant and intentional about your devotional time with the Lord. Pray Ephesians 6:10-18 before you step out of bed and onto the spiritual battlefield waiting for you each day.

6. Worship. This journey is all about Jesus Christ. He is the standard we are to live and walk by. Our goal in this journey is to raise up the standard He has set before us. Today, take some time to just worship at His feet and exalt His glorious name. A great worship song to take you to the throne room is: ***Revelation Song***.

7: Pray, again! (and without ceasing!). We are in a spiritual battle and we must become adept at wielding our spiritual weapons. *"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ"* (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).

Heavenly Father,
"Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come."
While we wait for "the blessed hope –
and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior,
Jesus Christ" we offer our lives as a sacrifice
to You in response to the standard You have
given us through Your Son's sacrificial death on the cross.
We have been bought with a price and our lives are not
our own. Complete the work You have begun in us,
no matter how painful Your refiners' fire may be.
Strip away everything that hinders us from being wholly
and holy Yours. Open our eyes to see Your holiness
and convict our hearts of our unworthiness. Examine our
hearts and rid us of anything and everything in our lives that offends
Your holy and glorious name. May our lives become a
fragrant offering, holy, pleasing, and acceptable to You
and may others be drawn to Your beauty because of the
sweet reflection of Jesus that we represent as we
live in accordance to Your perfect will as salt
and light in a tasteless and dark world.
Take pleasure in us as we delight in the precious time
we get to spend with you. Multiply the hours of our day
as we surrender these moments with you that they
may become more impactful for Your glory and
the furtherance of Your Kingdom.
"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"
In the exalted, glorious, and holy name of Jesus Christ,
the name by which every knee will bow and every tongue confess,
we pray. Amen.

[Psalm 26:2; Malachi 3:2-3; Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:20; Ephesians 5:2; Titus 2:13; Revelation 4:8b; 5:13b].

***“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus,
the Author and Perfector of our faith,
who for the joy set before Him endured the cross,
scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand
of the throne of God.
Consider Him who endured such opposition from sinful men,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”
(Hebrews 12:2-3)***

CRUCIFIED – Day 2:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 6:25-29

One of our most basic necessities is food, and if you have ever skipped a meal before you know how quickly the body begins its protests with rumblings and grumblings until you finally listen and satisfy the uproar. Of course, too much of a good thing can also do more than settle the noise and can often times create more problems. Without becoming too graphic we know that our intake of food has its ups and downs and its blessings and curses. But, ultimately, our body needs fuel for continued health and growth.

When Jesus began His earthly ministry He identified Himself as the “Supplier” of our human needs. Prior to our reading in John chapter 6 the Lord had just performed the miracle of feeding the 5,000 in which He clearly demonstrated His power to meet the physical needs of the people. The people saw Him as they saw Moses, a prophet who could give them food and water. As long as their physical needs were being met, what else could they possibly need? Their bellies were full and they were satisfied – at least for the moment (but how quickly gratitude turns to grumbling when hunger pangs set in (reference Exodus 16)). In any event, Jesus had gotten their attention and they followed after Him wanting more...more food!

Jesus came into the world to bring us more than physical food. He came into the world to do more than satisfy our physical needs. He was sent by the Heavenly Father to fulfill our greatest need. Jesus offers us all that we need and we don't have to work for it – it is a gift. ***“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you”*** (John 6:27a). To receive this gift requires only one thing – we must believe in the one that was sent – Jesus Christ!

***“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.”
(John 3:16)***

As we begin our day let us take a moment to thank God for His indescribable gift (2 Corinthians 9:15)! Then let us reflect on if we are truly trusting God to meet all our needs. Jesus has met our greatest need, but far too often we fail to trust Him to meet our everyday needs. We recognize and believe He has the power to save us from our sin and give us eternal life, but we waiver in our ability to believe He has the power to help us in our present circumstances. His Word exhorts us to, ***“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and ALL these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own”*** (Matthew 6:33-34). Take time today to confess those areas you are not completely trusting God to provide, submit them to the Lord in prayer, and repent of your unbelief. Waiting on God while He is working all things for your good and His glory can be a difficult discipline to learn, but taking the time to meditate on the promises in His Word to be your “Provision” will help keep your eyes fixed on Him and not your circumstances. Spend some time digging a little deeper today – His spiritual food will satisfy in a way that physical food never can.

Jesus satisfied the physical hunger and thirst of the people of His day, but He used it as a platform to express how He could meet their far greater spiritual need. May we, as we strive to be “Christ-like” and generous in our desire to help others, not overlook every opportunity to share the One Who will satisfy their greatest need. May we be prepared to share a portion of the abundance of the spiritual provision we have been given on our plate today with another hungry soul. Jesus wants us to want more....more of Him!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Luke 4:18-19

Jesus Christ is the *only* answer to our needs – past, present, and future. Bill Bright wrote: “No other person in history has influenced the world for good more than Jesus Christ.” He is all that we need. He is all that the world needs. That is why He was sent into the world – to meet our need and to do so cost Him His life. ***“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full”*** (John 10:10b). He gave up His life so we could have eternal life and live the abundant life He has always purposed for us.

When Jesus began His earthly ministry He stood in the temple of God and read from the scroll of Isaiah. In this text Jesus confirms the ministry to which He has been sent – to meet every human need: Our need for life; a life free from the entanglements of sin; a life free from the fear of death; a life eternal with God immortal; and an abundant and fruitful life; these, and so much more, are all available to us and achieved for us through the precious and priceless blood of Christ.

The Lord was enabled to accomplish this work because His ministry was marked by the power of the Holy Spirit (reference Isaiah 11:2). ***“The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me...”*** (Luke 4:18a). Our God is a Triune God – God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. They work together – the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son and

their purposes accomplished through the Spirit. The fullness of the power of the Holy Spirit is available to us because of His work of salvation. And this power is given to us at the moment of salvation. The Holy Spirit enables us to carry out the work of the Lord. ***“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us”*** (1 Corinthians 2:12).

Physical bread will never completely satisfy and we will most assuredly be hungry again. The Spiritual bread that Jesus offers us satisfies our every need; however, once we “taste and see” how good the Lord is our spiritual appetite begins to grow (reference Psalm 34:8). The Holy Spirit has been given to us as a gift to help us learn to eat and digest the spiritual food the Lord offers to us. We are promised that if we “hunger and thirst for righteousness” we will indeed “be filled” (Matthew 5:6). This afternoon let us take stock of those things in our life that we have been chewing on that offer us no nourishment, and are, in fact, depleting and destroying our physical and spiritual health. Ask God to empty you of all the artificial, unsatisfying, unholy substitutes that have been blocking you from coming to His table and ask to be filled with His pure, satisfying, holy nourishment each and every day. The stronger we are physically and spiritually, the more equipped and enabled we are to accomplish the work we have been commissioned to do. May we find our strength in the Lord and experience His power from on high.

***“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters;
and you who have no money, come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost.
Why spend money on what is not bread,
and your labor on what does not satisfy?
Listen, listen to Me, and eat what is good,
and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.”
(Isaiah 55:1-2)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 24:7-10

One of the names of God is **El Shaddai** – “**The LORD Almighty**” or “The LORD of hosts” – He is sovereign over all powers in the universe. Nothing is impossible for our God. Nothing rests outside His capable and powerful hands. This evening as we reflect on our day may we be reminded that the God we worship is strong, mighty, true and unchanging. He is the Sovereign over all the universe. His provision for us was planned and purposed by Him and through Him before the foundation of the world. He knew our every need from the very beginning and He will not fail in meeting our every need until the very end.

Tonight, before we close our eyes on this day, let us take time to lift our eyes to the heavens and worship the Lord. He is most worthy of our praise. Praise Him for all the ways He has revealed Himself to you today. Praise Him for walking with you throughout the day. Praise Him for His

protection and provision for your family. Praise Him for His power and presence in your life. Praise Him for Who He is and for all that He has done. Praise Him for He alone is worthy of our praise!

***“Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory?
The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is He, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty – He is the King of glory.”
(Psalm 24:7-10)***

***Heavenly Father,
Your Word says that
“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.” (Psalm 91:1)
I praise You that my safety, security
and provision rest in You.
Thank You that when I come to Your table
I am always satisfied. Always astounded.
Always blessed. You give me far more than
I could ever ask for. You know my need
even before I ask. Forgive me when
I look to other substitutes to fill me
when You are the only One who can satisfy.
Empty me of everything impure, unholy,
artificial so that I can be filled with Your Spirit,
Your Word, Your nourishment.
Make me a channel of Your grace to those You have
placed in my path. Give me Your heart to share
Your food, Your forgiveness, and
Your salvation with the world.
Thank You for allowing me to feast at Your table,
to be filled with Your Word,
and to delight in Your Presence.
May all that I say and do be a sweet reflection of You.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen***

CRUCIFIED – Day 3:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 6:30-34

One of the first things the Lord wanted us to know when He began His earthly ministry is that He came to fulfill our needs; and more importantly that He came to fulfill our greatest need: Life with Him! In the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve experienced the harsh reality of life without God when they chose to disobey God rather than be content with His abundant blessings. The Lord withheld nothing from them, but their sin cost them the greatest thing they had been given – the Presence of God in their lives. Satan knew exactly what he was doing when he tempted the Lord's most beloved creation – he knew that sin would separate mankind from the One thing they needed most, and more importantly would keep God from the one's He loved the most. Thankfully our Sovereign God foresaw this tragic situation and had already purposed His great Provision before creation to be sent at the appointed time to repair this horrible breach! **“He was chosen before the creation of the world...”** (1 Peter 1:20a).

As we learned yesterday, those who faithfully seek after the Lord and His righteousness will have their needs met (reference Matthew 6:33); but more importantly their greatest need will be met. When the Lord established the Tabernacle in the wilderness (and later His holy Temple) a table was set up in the Holy Place to receive a daily offering of the “bread of the Presence” (reference Exodus 25:30) This thank offering for the provision of daily bread was established as a daily reminder that it is the Lord Who is the Sustainer of His people and a foreshadowing of God's provision of **“the true bread from heaven”** in Jesus Christ (John 6:32).

***“The eyes of all look to You,
and You give them their food at the proper time.
You open Your hand and satisfy the desires
of every living thing.”
(Psalm 145:15-16)***

The Lord demonstrated His Presence among His people Israel during the wilderness wanderings with the miraculous provision of daily manna desiring that they would learn to depend upon Him and learn to trust Him beyond their physical needs (reference Deuteronomy 8:3). Eventually, however, the miraculous became the mundane when the people took for granted that it was the Lord's gracious hand providing manna from heaven to sustain them. Instead of being grateful and content with the Lord's provision they whined and complained and demanded variety in their diet, causing the Lord to become angry with them (reference Numbers 11:4-20). They received what they asked for only to become horribly sick because they failed to trust the Lord that He knew how to supply what they needed.

In our Scripture reading today the people asked for a miraculous sign from Jesus to prove He was sent from God. They believed that the coming Messiah would also provide manna just as Moses had long ago. Once again, however, the people missed the message (and the messenger) and failed to see that the Lord had indeed sent fresh manna from heaven, but this time His provision was meant to satisfy a deeper need. **“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”** (John 1:14a). After 400 years of silence, the Lord was revealing Himself and speaking loud and clear, but the people were still focused on having their physical needs met

rather than realizing their far greater spiritual need. Our Heavenly Father knows our every need and He knows that the presence of sin in our lives prevents us from having our greatest need met. This is why He sent His Son. ***“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:8).

This morning take time to reflect on the ways the Lord speaks to you and consider if you have truly heard what He has had to say, or if you have only received what you wanted to hear. Writing His Words down in your prayer journal is a helpful tool. When we set aside the time for fasting and prayer we allow the Lord the opportunity to speak to us through His Word. Our dependence upon Him for our spiritual food fine tunes our hearing and yields greater understanding. The time we spend in His Word brings greater clarity and we are more able to discern His voice. Repent of the times you have grumbled and complained because you have not gotten what you wanted and offer a prayer of gratitude that the Lord kept you from experiencing the painful consequences of getting what you asked for. We only need to look at the present state of our nation to realize that often getting what we ask for (and demand!) results only in greater burdens rather than blessings. The Old Testament history of Israel provides a clear picture of a people who suffered the consequences of getting what they asked for (reference 1 Samuel 8:5-9)! As you spend time in prayer with the Lord this morning, submit your requests to Him and trust Him for the answer He brings – it will be exactly what you need – even if the answer is “No!” or “Wait!”

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read John 1:32-33

Jesus’ Presence on this earth revolutionized the world. His teachings, His healings, His ministry, and His life radically affected and transformed the way people thought and lived. While many today would choose to deny His deity, few would deny the impact He has had on individual lives and society as a whole. He was a revolutionary in His time and the work He came to do continues to touch and transform every aspect of society today. Everything from culture, to education, to science, to government, to medicine, to social reform, and business has had His fingerprint upon it. All this has come as a result of the rule of God in the hearts and lives of believers who have followed the example He has set and allowed His Spirit to reign in and through their lives.

When Jesus came down from heaven to dwell among us He opened the way for the Holy Spirit to dwell within us. ***“I saw the Spirit come down from heaven as a dove and remain on Him. I would not have known Him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, ‘The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is He who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.’ I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God”*** (John 1:32-33). It is through the power of the Holy Spirit the Lord accomplished His mission on this earth and it is only through the indwelling power of Holy Spirit that we have any hope of accomplishing ours. Our lunch time devotions these next 40 days will focus on the seven-fold Spirit of God.

The greatest thing the Holy Spirit enables us to do is to experience a life of deep and abiding intimacy with the Lord. The work the Lord desires to do within us through His Holy Spirit far exceeds any work He will do through us. While our greatest need is Jesus – His greatest desire is for us. He wants to show us His goodness and provision, if only we will believe and trust Him. Jesus revolutionized the world because of the relationship He had with the Father and with the Holy Spirit. The work He accomplished through the cross achieved that same powerful relationship and connection for us and there is nothing and no one that can separate us from the Source of our Strength (Romans 8:35-39). The only thing that will keep us from experiencing His Sustaining Power, Provision and Presence in our life is our own unwillingness (and ungratefulness) to receive what He offers us. Ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of your heart to respond to the message the Lord has for you today. Receive the portion He has placed on your plate with gratitude knowing that it is a gift sent from heaven.

***“The Sovereign LORD has given me an instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.
He wakens me morning by morning,
wakens my ear to listen like one being taught.
The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears,
and I have not been rebellious;
I have not drawn back”
(Isaiah 50:4-5)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 146

Our greatest need is for Jesus and the Lord’s greatest desire is for us to know Him. Last night we meditated on Psalm 24 asking the question, ***“Who is this King of Glory?”*** and the answer given was: ***“The LORD Almighty – He is the King of Glory”*** These 40 days are meant to lead us back to our First Love with greater passion as we delve into the depths of who our Lord is, the life He lived, the way He expressed His love, and the work He came to do. The more we dig into the Word of God the closer to Lord we become, and the further away from the world we want to be. The Lord desires that we would long to be with Him as much as He wants to be with us. He has gone to prepare a place for us knowing that He is returning to take us home soon. There is no greater work we have to do then to prepare ourselves, and the others the Lord has placed in our paths, to enter that glorious Kingdom He has prepared for us.

The greater our knowledge and understanding of the Lord is, the greater we desire to praise Him. Especially when we begin to realize how much of His work throughout creation has been on our behalf. He has gone to great lengths and great sacrifice to repair the breach that separated us from Him, and continues to work in our lives and on our behalf to prevent anything else from getting in our way. The greatest obstacle in our path is often ourselves as we find far too many things to distract us and keep us from spending time with the Lord and nurturing our relationship

with Him. If we take advantage of the time we have been given these 40 days to fix our eyes more on Jesus, and less on our circumstances, we will find ourselves better equipped to face the challenges and/or opportunities along the way as we run the race set before us.

During our evening devotions we will spend time focusing on offering our praise to the Lord as we unfold the seven-fold attributes of perfect praise expressed in Revelation 7. Tonight meditate on the words of one of the great Hallelujahs Psalms – Psalm 146 – and offer a prayer of praise to our great King who sits on the throne. Express your trust in Him as you lift up a song of praise for His constant goodness, faithfulness, kindness, and love in your life.

***“Praise the LORD.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.
I will praise the LORD all my life;
I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.”
(Psalm 146:1-2)***

***Heavenly Father,
“I will praise you, O LORD my God,
with all my heart;
I will glorify Your name forever.”
(Psalm 86:12)
You stepped down from heaven and rescued
me from my pit.
You set me high upon a rock
and gave me a firm place to stand.
I place my trust and confidence in You
as I seek daily to walk in Your ways
and bring glory to Your name.
You have met my every need
and have given me far more than I
could ever hope for or imagine.
My desire from this point forward
is for more of You.
Fill me to the overflow with Your
goodness, kindness, and love
so I can share You with the world.
May my life reflect Your goodness
as I seek to live a life of praise and
gratitude and not of criticism
or complaint. May You take pleasure
in all that I do as I receive gratefully
all that you have done on my behalf
I am not worthy of Your blessings,
but You alone are worthy of all my praise.
Your praise will continually be on my lips***

*as I seek to exalt Your Holy and glorious Name.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

CRUCIFIED – Day 4:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 6:35-40

Jesus had just finished telling the crowd that God was offering them a bread that would provide life eternal, and they responded affirmatively: “give us this bread” (v.34). They were expecting a miracle bread that would prolong their physical life, but what Jesus was offering them would transform their life for all eternity. He declared to them, **“I am the Bread of Life.”** This was the first of seven names that Jesus used in His teaching as He began to reveal who He was and why He was sent. These next 40 days, as we journey towards the cross, we will be studying these “self-descriptions” of Jesus as we feast on the One Who had been sent from above.

When God first introduced Himself to Moses as **“I AM WHO I AM”** (Exodus 3:14) He revealed Himself as a dependable, trustworthy and faithful God. The name that was given was vitally important, because, to the Jews, a person's name was a representation of their full character. The name of God would therefore have to encompass far more than any human name. **“The LORD, The LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion, and sin...”** (Exodus 34:6-7a). Jesus elaborated on the name of God as He lived and walked among the people of His day; expressing the magnificence of God by name, and demonstrating His majesty by deed. His name meant everything and that is why God gave Him the name that is above all names.

***“Therefore God exalted Him to the highest place
and gave Him the name that is above every name,
that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”
(Philippians 2:9-11)***

With every word and deed Jesus' life was a bold declaration that He had indeed been sent from Heaven. He had been sent for one purpose and that purpose was to do the Father's will. **“For I have come down from heaven not to do My will but to do the will of Him who sent Me”** (John 6:38). Jesus came to offer His life as spiritual food for a spiritually malnourished world. In Moses' day physical manna had been sent from heaven to discipline the people to depend upon God for all their needs (reference Deuteronomy 8:3), and in Jesus' day fresh manna was being sent as a profound and unique demonstration of the Father's benevolent love to the world to meet a far greater need.

***“He who comes to Me will NEVER go hungry,
and He who believes in Me will NEVER be thirsty.”
(John 6:35b, emphasis added)***

Jesus wanted the people to learn to depend on Him as their more substantial daily bread, just as He Himself depended upon the Father for His daily nourishment to fulfill the purposes for which He had been sent. ***“My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work”*** (John 4:34). He had been sent as a physical representation of the Heavenly Father, and even though He was fully God His dependence upon the Father was vital to accomplishing the work He had been sent to do. As His followers, it is critical that we learn to trust God for our daily bread and become intentional about feasting on the spiritual food He has placed in our hands, the Holy Bible, EVERY DAY! The work we have been commissioned to do is a heavenly and holy assignment. As His ambassadors we can’t “make disciples” if we haven’t been one ourselves. Jesus set the example for us as He went to the Father daily for His spiritual food to be strengthened to do the work He had been sent to do; if we are going to be true follower’s of Jesus Christ we must be willing to do the same. Let us not forget that we too bear His Name!

***“When Your words came, I ate them;
they were my joy and my heart’s delight,
for I bear Your Name, O LORD God Almighty.”
(Jeremiah 15:16)***

There is a valid (though ignorant) reason why the unbelieving world does not want the name of Jesus lifted up in prayer – it is because His name holds extraordinary power. The Scriptures declare that at His name every knee will bow, but to an arrogant, stubborn, independent, self-sufficient, sinful world the last thing they want to do is bow their knee to any authority that could possibly disrupt their selfish, self-fulfilling lifestyle. Sadly, their ignorant and stubborn hearts are preventing them from realizing that everything God has done is, in fact, for their benefit, and that He wants to bless them; He wants to set them free to experience a liberty they have never known; and more importantly He wants them to know how much He loves them; so much so that He died for them. Let us not forget, however, that we were once where they are ourselves – lost – separated from God; and if not for the grace of God, we too would still be living utterly blind and deaf to the extraordinary blessings that Jesus Christ offers us.

This morning as we digest our spiritual breakfast, may we like Ezekiel and John savor the Words of God like sweet honey, but also not disregard that bitter feeling in the pit of our stomachs as we are gravely reminded of the many who remain separated from God (reference Ezekiel 3:3; Revelation 10:9-11). When we sit at our tables we offer grace to God for our food; but when we sit at the Lord’s table He offers us grace as our food. Before we take a single step into the busyness and routine of the day, let us take time to lift up a prayer of gratitude to the Lord that He drew us to Himself and offered us the sweet, fulfilling taste of His heavenly manna and we obediently received it. Repent of the many times we have gone through the day without taking the time to sit down at His table to feast on the abundance of spiritual food that He had prepared so thoughtfully and sacrificially for us. And pray fervently for those who have never tasted and seen how good the Lord is. Write down the names of those in your own circle of influence that you know are lost and living a spiritually malnourished life. Keep coming to the Lord’s banqueting table and take enough to share with those on your list!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read John 6:44

The revolutionizing work of God is accomplished with all three members of the God-head working in unity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus came to do the will of the Father, but He relied fully on the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit to accomplish that work. ***“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him, and I will raise him up in the last day”*** (v.44). The Father sent His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world to save mankind from the punishment of sin and death, but men do not come to Jesus on their own initiative, they are divinely drawn. It is the Heavenly Father that draws men to His Son; and it is the Holy Spirit that convicts man of his sin and helps him recognize his need for a Savior. ***“All that the Father gives Me will come to Me...”*** (v.37a).

***“I have loved you with an everlasting love;
I have drawn you with loving-kindness.”
(Jeremiah 31:3)***

The Lord draws people to Himself like a deep well offering a refreshing drink. ***“...he who believes in Me will never be thirsty”*** (John 6:35b). Water is another one of those basic necessities we need for life. We may be able to survive without food for great lengths of time (40 days, at least!), but it is virtually impossible to survive more than three days without water. Approximately 57% of the human body is made up of water and it is vital that we replenish it on a daily basis. Water is necessary for the land to remain fertile and productive. Throughout Scripture we read how important it was for there to be a water source or well for the people to camp around. Today there is still a great percentage of our world that does not have a fresh water source to tap into.

Jesus offered the Samaritan woman at the well His life giving water: ***“...whoever drinks the water I give Him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life”*** (John 4:14). She, like the crowd who gathered around Jesus demanding the bread He had to offer, did not fully grasp the reality of what He was offering. This eternal spring of living water is the gift of the Spirit who indwells those who are drawn to the Lord and believe in Him for salvation. ***“For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body...and we were all given one Spirit to drink”*** (1 Corinthians 12:13).

The presence of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer is a constant spring of living water that enables us to live out the teachings of Jesus Christ and empowers us to accomplish the work we have been commissioned to do. The blessed results of drinking in this abundant flow of life giving water is seen in the production of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and the courage and boldness we are given to become a drink offering for the thirsty world. ***“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering...”*** (2 Timothy 4:6). ***“For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline”*** (1 Timothy 1:6).

The Lord wants to be the endless source of spiritual bread and life-giving water to His people, but far too often we look for other artificial sources that just don't satisfy. ***“My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water”*** (Jeremiah 2:13). This afternoon let us take time to repent of those idols in our life that have become obstacles that are blocking the

spiritual flow of God's goodness and grace in our lives and hindering us from offering His refreshing drink to a world dying of thirst. Ask the Lord to empty you of anything stagnant or poisonous in your life that has left you parched, wilted, and ineffective; allow Him, instead, to purify and cleanse you so you can be transformed into a willing vessel ready to be filled to the overflow with His Presence. Ask the Lord to prepare His people to receive a fresh outpouring of His Spirit so we will be refreshed and enabled to accomplish the work of His kingdom as we await His return (reference Joel 2: 28-32). And pray for those across the world who desperately need clean water to drink as well as the more important, pure, life giving water that Jesus Christ has to offer. ***"They feast on the abundance of Your house; you give them drink from Your river of delights. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light"*** (Psalm 36:8-9).

***"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."
(Romans 15:13)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 147

How blessed we are that everything the Lord offers us is a gift of His extraordinary and sacrificial love. He is the one who draws us to Himself in the first place, and then continues to work in and through us for our good and His glory. He has given us the amazing gift of the Holy Spirit to revive and refresh us so that we are enabled and empowered for the work He calls us to do. The Lord provides everything we need.

***"The Lord will guide you always;
He will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden
like a spring whose waters never fail."
(Isaiah 58:11)***

However, the Lord's divine sovereignty doesn't negate our human responsibility; in all things we are called to believe and obey. This evening let us offer up a prayer of praise to our great God and Savior for His redeeming work on our behalf, and for the Sovereign work of the Heavenly Father, and for the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as they work together to accomplish their holy purposes in and through our lives to the glory of God. May we come before the Lord with humble hearts knowing that it was the Father who drew us to Him in the first place

and it was not anything we have done. How blessed we are to know this God who loves us so much and is so passionate about pursuing us even when we didn't know what we needed.

Praise Him for the divine appointments He places in our path each day that give us opportunity to bear witness to His glorious grace and mercy in our lives. May we not miss any of those opportunities to radiate His light and offer His refreshing drink to those lost in darkness and dying of thirst. Let us also praise Him that He bears the responsibility for drawing men to Himself, and our responsibility is simply to be obedient to sharing His glorious salvation message with others – He will do the rest.

As we meditate on this evening's Psalm, let us lift up a song of praise for the Lord's continued Provision in our lives, for the Presence of His Holy Spirit, for the Power to be bold witnesses in the way we live our lives and share His message with others; for the privilege of being His child, and the peace that pervades our lives because we are His and nothing can separate us from His love. As we end our day let us return to where we began and worship His great and glorious Name. Click [HERE](#) to listen and worship with Natalie Grant's new song "Your Great Name."

**Heavenly Father,
"I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations;
I will sing of You among the peoples.
For great is Your love, higher than the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens,
and let Your glory be over all the earth."
(Psalm 57:9)
Thank You for offering me a refreshing drink
from Your river of delights.
You daily satisfy my soul.
There is nothing else, and no one else,
who can satisfy me like You do.
Plant me besides the streams of Your
living water and let me feast daily from the
abundance of Your table.
Pour me out like a drink offering upon the
world. Empty me of me so all they
receive is You and none of me.
Great are You God and most worthy of praise.
Let Your Word and Your praises
be continually upon my lips.
In the glorious and powerful name of Jesus Christ I pray.
Amen.**

CRUCIFIED – Day 5:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 6:45-51

Jesus was sent by the Father as bread from Heaven for the world to feast upon. The great provision of the New Covenant is this “spiritual manna” that God would offer mankind to eat, so that God’s laws, once written on tablets of stone, would be ingested to become inner principles, written on human hearts. All that is required is our willingness to believe, and our responsiveness to receive this life-giving, life-changing nourishment He offers.

***“This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel
after that time,’ declares the LORD.
‘I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.
I will be their God, and they will be my people.
No longer will a man teach his neighbor,
or a man his brother saying, ‘Know the LORD,’
because they will know Me,
from the least of them to the greatest,’
declares the LORD.”
(Jeremiah 31:33-34)***

Jesus’ breathed life into the Word of God when He stepped out of heaven and onto earth’s soil. ***“The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us”*** (John 1:14a). God’s desire for us to know Him was not meant to purely academic, but experiential. What He wanted us to know about Him was not meant to rest in the pages of a book on some abandoned shelf, but to take root in our hearts so that we would be abandoned to Him. His desire was so great for us to experience His awesome and endless love in a profound and personal way that He sent His Son to demonstrate it for us.

***“I am the living bread that came down from heaven.
If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever.
This bread is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”
(John 6:51)***

To truly know God is to experience God; a knowledge that would require far more than the mind but would enlist the entire body – heart, mind and soul. Not merely head knowledge – but heart knowledge. The process of transferring the great knowledge of God from the six inches from our head to our hearts couldn’t possibly be achieved from a textbook, but rather through trial. Jesus showed us, from the onset of His earthly ministry, that the lessons God had for us to learn would come from a place of tribulation, testing, and temptation. At the end of His 40 day fast in the desert when hunger and temptation set in, Jesus showed us that His Word would be our most valuable and effective weapon to achieve victory in the midst of weakness and spiritual warfare (reference Matthew 4:1-11). How vital it is that we feed on God’s Word so that we will be prepared to face the trials that will inevitably come into our life (reference 1 Peter 4:12-13).

“They are not just idle words for you –

***they are your life.”
(Deuteronomy 32:47a)***

These 40 days that we are walking together were purposed by God with a desire that we would return to our First Love with wholehearted devotion and a desire to know Him more fully and experience Him more intimately (reference Revelation 2:4-5). This is a time of preparation that the Lord has so graciously given us to refresh us for the final leg of our journey. He is returning soon, and when He does may He find His Bride faithfully watching, fully devoted, with oil lamps burning brightly to light the way for our Beloved Bridegroom. ***“...and His bride has made herself ready”*** (Revelation 19:7b). Consider this our own personal Emmaus Road experience as the Lord walks beside us; teaching us and feeding us tasty little morsels from His Word, delighting in us as we willingly surrender our normal routine to spend intimate time with Him, and igniting us with a greater passion for the knowledge of who He is. ***“Were not our hearts burning within us while He talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”*** (Luke 24:32). The Holy Bible is not just a book, it is a Person – the Person of Jesus Christ. His gift to us came at a great price and our pursuit of Him should be our utmost priority.

Let us take a moment today to consider the many books, magazines, articles, and newspapers we have read; all the research we have done to learn a new activity, language, or skill; all the knowledge and education we have gained to become an authority in a subject or profession. Education and knowledge are important to achieving a successful life in this world, and while our freedom and ability to get an education should not be taken for granted, the greatest, most productive, and most impactful use of our time will come from the attention we have given to knowing God by spending time with Him in His Word and in communion with Him in prayer. Offer a prayer of gratitude for the privilege of owning a copy of the Word of God, the Holy Bible, and the freedom we have to study it and share it. That freedom came at a great cost as well. Let us lift up our “Sword of the Spirit” and pray for those around the world who are laying their lives on the line every day to share the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ with the lost. May we, ourselves, take advantage of the time we have to study the gift of God’s Word that so many have fought to preserve; and may we ***“declare it fearlessly as we should”*** (Ephesians 6:20b), making the most of every opportunity to offer a tasty morsel of God’s truth to those who are feeding on worldly trash.

May we be equipped with the knowledge of who God is, what He has done for us, and the promises in His Word that He provides for us, so that we can face the trials, tribulations and temptations, that most assuredly will come, without fear and with great joy as we experience victory in Christ, as well as a deeper understanding of God’s extraordinary love for us. Bury His Word deep in your heart you will need to draw from it in the days ahead! ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”*** (Hebrews 13:5b).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read John 6:63

Our life is a gift from God (reference Genesis 2:7). It is a very precious and fragile thing. A gift that the world (without the Light of Christ) misunderstands as they seek desperately to preserve their own lives, while at the same time fail to protect the lives of the innocent and unborn. When Jesus came into the world, He came to offer us an even higher quality of life – the gift of eternal life. ***“In Him was life, and that life was the light of men”*** (John 1:4). To achieve that life for us cost Him His own life which He willingly and obediently laid down. ***“...which I will give for the life of the world”*** (John 6:51b).

The life that Jesus offers us comes through the Spirit. ***“The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life”*** (v.63). The Spirit that was deposited in us, as a result of the salvation achieved for us through the sacrificial and atoning death of Christ Jesus, is a life-producing presence. ***“He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit, for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life”*** (2 Corinthians 3:6). It is the Spirit of God who writes God’s Word upon our hearts. Additionally, it is the Holy Spirit who prompts us to hunger for God’s Word and empowers us to walk in His ways fueled with that spiritual nourishment we have ingested.

God desires that His Word be deeply rooted in us, and He has graciously provided His Holy Spirit to water the seeds of His Word so it will grow and produce life-giving fruit that is meant to feed the world with the love of God. The Lord has provided everything we need to live our lives abundantly and victoriously for the glory of His name. Unfortunately, we are bombarded daily with contradicting messages from an unsatisfied world that tells us we always need more. The Lord desires that we fill our minds daily with His Word and allow the Holy Spirit to write His Word on our hearts so we can combat the lies and deceptions of this world with His Truth and be reminded that our every need has already been met.

The Lord has given us everything we need to live the victorious life He has purposed for us. The question we might ask ourselves is: Who or what are we living for? If we were being completely honest we would have to admit that we are mostly living for ourselves and not fully for God. The reality is, if we were truly living for God we would ask nothing for ourselves – we would be totally surrendered to Him. Our utmost desire would be to know Him, our focus would be to worship Him, and we would be greatly offended by anything we or anyone else did that profaned His holy name. Sadly, we find many other things to occupy our time instead, and we are far too tolerant of the world. Far too often we seek God because we want something from Him, instead of simply wanting to be with Him. As we consider the motivation behind our time of fasting we must consider if our response to the Lord’s promptings to meet with Him this way is because we are expecting something from Him or simply because He has called us to spend time with Him. Are we looking for a problem solver or a healing hand so our lives will be less complicated and more comfortable to live? Or are we truly interested in getting to know the One Who has given us everything we need and abundantly and exceedingly more than we could ever hope to imagine or ask!

***“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more
than all we ask or imagine, according to His power
that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church
and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations,
for ever and ever! Amen.”
(Ephesians 3:20-21)***

Charles Spurgeon has said that, “God does not call us to some great work, He simply calls us to Himself.” The Lord desires that we be fully surrendered to Him. May we relinquish everything – including our doubts and fears – solely for the privilege of knowing Him. The knowledge of Him we can never exhaust, but that shouldn’t keep us from seeking Him with all our hearts. ***“Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written”*** (John 21:25). May we receive a “well done good and faithful servant” because we took

advantage of the life we have been given to know the One who gave us that life! Ask God to increase your appetite for His Word, to give you a distaste for the things of the world, and to instill in you a compassionate heart for the lost.

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 148

As we come to the end of our day may the all the worries, concerns, anxieties, and questions that are crowding our mind be cast aside as we turn our attention to the praise of our Lord. When we consider all that we have been given by heaven's standards we can hardly offer up the slightest criticism or complaint for the life that we are living; no matter how financially deficient we may be according to the world's standards. The answer to the world's problems will always be to throw money at it. But God's answer is to pour out His love!

God spared nothing when He opened up the storehouse of heaven and flooded the earth with living water from His throne in the Person of Jesus Christ, His One and Only Son. He is a gracious, good, and benevolent Heavenly Father who gives us His very best. He knows our every need and will not fail in taking care of those who earnestly seek Him (reference Psalm 34:10). May we set aside our earthly strivings and surrender ourselves fully into the capable and compassionate hands of our Heavenly Father who reserves nothing but His best for the chosen, crowned, children of the King! In case your wondering – that's you!

***“Let them praise the name of the LORD,
for His name alone is exalted;
His splendor is above the earth and the heavens.
He has raised up for His people a horn,
the praise of all His saints,
of Israel, the people close to His heart.
Praise the Lord!”
(Psalm 148:13-14)***

Beloved, sometimes God's best is a painful thorn that pricks your heart in a way that you can hardly bare. Please know that sometimes the trials that cross your path are given to unlock a door to deeper knowledge and understanding of the Lord. The heartbreak and heartache you may be experiencing gained you access to the heart of God in a way that others may never get the opportunity to experience. Remember His knowledge is experiential, not academic. You will never know the depths of God's love by simply reading about it; if He has opened up your heart and allowed you to experience the agony of heartbreak, betrayal, or disappointment you've gained access to the secret place of God and have an insight to His heart you never would have known otherwise. ***“Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”*** (Job 2:10b). Your trial

has touched His heart, and He has allowed you to enter into the Holy of Holies – His heart. Abide deeply under the compassionate folds of His tender wing as He binds your wounds and heals your broken heart (reference Psalm 147:3). The gift you have received will set someone else free! Praise Him for He knows your every need – even if the rose covered path is currently strewn with thorns – trust that He will always give His best to thee! O how He loves you and me!

The THORN
by Martha Snell Nicholson

***I stood a mendicant of God before His royal throne
And begged Him for one priceless gift which I could call my own.***

***I took the gift from out His hand but as I would depart,
I cried, 'But, Lord, this is a thorn and it has pierced my heart.
This is a strange, a hurtful gift, which Thou hast given me.'
He said, 'My child, I give good gifts and gave My best to thee.'***

***I took it home and though at first the cruel thorn hurt but sore.
As long years passed I learned at last to love it more and more.
I learned He never gives a thorn without this added grace,
He takes the thorn to pin aside the veil which hides His face.'***

**Heavenly Father,
Thank you that "Your Word is a lamp to my feet
and a light for my path."
(Psalm 119:105)**

**You have brought light and life into this
dark world and I praise You
that You illuminated the deep
recesses of my heart with
Your Truth and Your love.
I want to live my life totally
abandoned to You;
even knowing what will come when I
pray 'break my heart for what
breaks Yours'.**

**How painful life can be sometimes,
but how much more unbearable if that
life was without You.**

**I praise You that I will never have to
experience what You, Lord Jesus,
experienced when the Father
turned His back on You because You bore
our sins on the cross.**

Thank You for bearing that weight

*so that I never would have to.
May I be so hidden in Christ
that all the world sees is You.
Take pleasure in Me, dear Lord.
Bury me in the deep recesses of Your
heart and may Your love
and Your Truth and Your Praise be the
only things on my lips.
To the praise of Your Glory.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

CRUCIFIED – Day 6:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 6:53-58

Our spiritual connection to the Father is vital to achieving the life He has always purposed for us to have. Apart from Him we have no life in us; we are dry, dead bones wasting away and in need of revival (reference Ezekiel 37:5). I believe it was Oswald Chambers that said, “To wash and dress a corpse is a far different thing from making a man alive; man can do the one, God alone can do the other.” Only God can give us life – the life we so desperately need!!

Before we came to the Father, through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, we embraced any fleshly substitute to fulfill that innate desire to feel alive and that nagging emptiness inside us crying out to be accepted and loved. God created us, therefore, He knows exactly what we need to live the life He purposed for us to live. He is the One who breathed life into us in the first place (reference Genesis 2:7), He is the One who determines the exact moment that breath will be removed, and He purposed that every breath in between would come from His Holy Spirit. **“And with that He breathed on them and said, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit’ (John 20:22).**

As our physical food provides nourishment, health, vitality, and aids in the development of the body, so likewise does the spiritual food that comes from Jesus provide the nourishment necessary to promote and sustain the health of His Body. As His children we are part of His Body, of which He is the Head. **“And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way” (Ephesians 1:22).** As recipients of this glorious new life, and delivered from the deadly results of sin, we have been purified and given a clean bill of health; in essence we have received a second lease on life, with a promise of experiencing an abundantly fulfilled life; because of this we should want to do whatever is necessary to experience the fullness of what God has intended for us in this new birth (John 10:10). Each one of us is an important part of God’s Body and it is vital that we take the steps necessary to achieve good spiritual health so the Body will remain strong and able to function at its optimum level.

***“See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.
If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.
And this is what He promised us – even eternal life.”***

(1 John 2:24)

The new life we have received from Jesus Christ is eternal; and that life begins at the moment of salvation – it is not just a future promise, it is a present reality. His death and resurrection achieved for us the highest quality of life possible by opening the way for us to experience living fellowship with the Father both now and forevermore. The benefits of that extraordinary relationship are meant to be experienced now, while we live and walk on this earth. We don't have to wait until we enter the Kingdom of Heaven to enjoy His fellowship – the kingdom is here – the kingdom is in our hearts. **“...the kingdom of God is within you”** (Luke 17:21).

The Lord wants us to enjoy fellowship with Him each and every day. He wants us to come to His table and dine with Him; to feast upon the abundance of wisdom and knowledge He has to share with us; to listen as He unlocks the secrets to the Kingdom of heaven; to experience the peace and joy of knowing He is always with us; to understand the power at our disposal because He is within us. We have nothing to fear when we surrender our time to be with Him – every minute of our day that we invest in spending time with the Lord will be multiplied and returned to us a hundred fold. The impact and effectiveness that will result from time spent with the Lord will far exceed any activity surrendered or opportunity missed. When our utmost pursuit is to know God, His higher purposes and His heavenly provision will become our reward. **“And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him”** (Hebrews 11:6).

As we plan our day and prepare to walk out the door, checking off our list that we had our time with God, have we considered if we are scheduling God around our lives, or are our lives scheduled around our God? Have we even ever considered just scheduling an entire day to spend with the Lord, solely for the pure pleasure of spending intimate time with Him? Have you ever planned a vacation just to meet with God? In our busy, congested, over-stimulated lives the thought of giving up an entire day just to be still before the Lord in prayer and in the study of His Word can seem unfathomable, something reserved only for Pastors and teachers of the Word. But the reality is, that is what God desires from all of His children. His desire is that our devotion of Him will grow from a discipline of eating three meals with Him to a lifestyle of living for Him. **“...the one who feeds on Me will live because of Me”** (John 6:57b). As we pray let us linger a little longer so we don't miss out on what the Lord has to say – we have been raised with a fast food, drive thru', convenience-oriented mindset and as a result we may feel like we are wasting precious time when there is just so much to get done – but time spent with the Lord is always time well spent – you will always get the greatest return on your investment with Him! **“Be still and know that I am God”** (Psalm 46:10).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Romans 14:17

Jesus came in human flesh to have fellowship with us and to restore fellowship between us and the Father. What better way to fellowship than around the table at meal time. Some of us

who have enjoyed the benefits of living a “lifestyle of fasting” have learned to take a necessary “spiritual time out” every so often to enjoy fellowship meals. The food seems to taste so much better, and the fellowship that much more meaningful, when enjoyed in the company of family and friends. Many of Jesus’ lessons were taught around the meal table or after He had provided food for the people following Him. Students seem to learn better when their stomachs are full (although, some also fall asleep after a good meal!). In all matters, Jesus wants our full and undivided attention; and for those of you who have fasted before you understand how much more fully dependent upon God you are for His Spiritual nourishment when you have had little physical sustenance. Pressing in when you are physically weak, and staying alert when you are starving, takes on a whole new meaning when the pain you are experiencing is a choice you have made and not a circumstance thrust upon you.

Jesus used food as a means of discipline to cause His people to become more fully dependent upon Him. **“Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord”** (Deuteronomy 8:3b). Achieving intimacy with God is a discipline that is learned; our hunger for God does not come as naturally as our hunger for physical food. The spiritual benefits of feasting on God’s Word are not always immediately and visibly realized the way devouring an “In-and-Out Double-Double” is at satisfying our physical cravings (sorry if that makes you hungry...just got back from a trip to California and had a momentary relapse!). The Lord is not interested in making us suffer, He just wants us surrendered. When we come to His table full of ourselves already we have little room left for Him to fill us. Our times of fasting allow our Lord to empty us of us, so He can make more room for Himself. **“He must become greater; I must become less”** (John 3:30).

Jesus has gone to prepare a home for us in heaven, and one of the first things we will enjoy when He returns for us is a time of glorious fellowship with our Lord at the great wedding supper of the Lamb (reference Revelation 19:7-9). It will be a time of feasting like we have never known! **“On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples...”** (Isaiah 25:6a). Preparation for that glorious day will come from the way we are disciplined to eat today. We should become proficient at eating at the table of the King and dining in His presence. We have no reason to be fearful, we are His friends. He delights in our presence and we should delight in, and desire, His. We are royalty, the crowned children of the King of Kings, and our appetite should be for the richest of fare (reference Isaiah 55:2); everything the world has to offer should pale in comparison and not even tempt us in the least to step away from His bountiful banqueting table. Daniel understood this when he was required to eat from the earthly kings’ table, but because his sole desire was to bring pleasure and honor to his heavenly King, he was abundantly blessed for his faithfulness and obedience (reference Daniel 1:8).

Before going to the cross our Lord had one final fellowship meal with His closest companions. The celebration of Passover, which reflected back on the sacrifice given through the shed blood of a lamb to achieve Israel’s deliverance from bondage in Egypt, would from now on be transformed into the observance of the Lord’s Supper, which would look forward to the extraordinary sacrifice and shed blood of the Lamb of God who would deliver mankind, once and for all, from the penalty of sin and death. **“For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God...For I tell you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes”** (Luke 22:16, 18). We have the promise of fellowshiping with the Lord in heaven when He returns for us. Let us, therefore, not waste any opportunity to fellowship with our gracious Host now as we prepare for that glorious celebration that awaits us.

***“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking;
but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit...”
(Romans 14:17)***

The great spiritual blessings from heaven are ours for the taking today. All the benefits of the eternal, abundant life are ours to enjoy and feast on through the gift of the Holy

Spirit. How blessed we are that when we ***“hunger and thirst for righteousness”*** we have the guarantee that we ***“will be filled”*** (Matthew 5:6). Pray today for the Holy Spirit to instill within you a growing appetite for the things of God and make every effort to not miss any “spiritual” meal with the Lord. The Lord is always waiting for you, whether you show up or not. But if you don’t, just realize you will be missing out on an extraordinary time of fellowship with the One you will be spending all eternity with. With each and every meal ask Him to transform your schedule and to discipline your life to spend intimate time with Him first and foremost, and then order your day around His plans for you and the purposes He intends to fulfill. Take time to bask in His Presence today and savor every tasty morsel of His Word. ***“I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for Him.’ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him, to the one who seeks Him”*** (Lamentations 3:24-25)

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 149

One of the great privileges of fellowship with the Lord is the times we spend in prayer with Him. So often we come before Him in pray to simply make a request, when His desire is for us to enjoy that sweet communion with Him. ***“Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in Him”*** (John 6:56). We have received the blessings of a living union with Christ and His desire is that we remain in Him, so that He can remain in us. The more we are willing to take in the more we will be filled with!

***“If you remain in Me and My words remain in you,
ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you”
(John 15:7)***

The greatest impact we have in the world will be because of the investment we have made in abiding in Christ in His Word and in fellowship with Him in prayer. To pray properly and effectively we must know His Word, and we must believe what He has taught us. God’s Word adds fuel to the altar of prayer and keeps it aflame. ***“The Word of God and Prayer are inseparable – the power of one is dependent upon the presence of the other.”*** Our prayers are greatly effected by our understanding of the Word of God and the experiences we go through as we live out His Word.

As we meditate on Psalm 149 this evening let us offer the Lord praise for the powerful weapon He has placed in our mouths and in our hands (Reference Hebrews 4:12). ***“He made my mouth like a sharpened sword, in the shadow of His hand He hid me; He made me into a polished arrow and concealed me in His quiver”*** (Isaiah 49:2). Let us wield this mighty weapon on behalf of those in our lives who need truth, healing, encouragement, understanding, answers, freedom, and God. The greatest thing we can offer anyone who has a need is our prayers that

have been activated with the promises of God's Word. When God's children pray He hears and acts on behalf of those whose lives He wants to transform and touch. May we become channels of His grace, that when we pray, His power is poured out from heaven to bless the lives of those He has divinely intersected our lives with. May we make the most of every opportunity to bring those in need to the throne of grace that they may be touched by the One who is their greatest need. ***"Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"*** (Hebrews 4:16).

***"May the praise of God be in their mouths
and a double-edged sword in their hands."
(Psalm 149:6)***

Billy Graham has said, "If there be any tears in heaven, it will be over the fact that there were so many answers to prayer that few bothered to ask." May we shed our tears now as we labor in prayer and intercede on behalf of God's church which is desperately in need of revival and the world which is desperately in need of God!

***Heavenly Father,
"My mouth is filled with Your praise
declaring Your splendor all day long"
(Psalm 71:8)
Thank you for filling Me with
the abundance of Your Word
and giving me a reason to praise
You each and every day.
Whenever I come to You
I am always satisfied.
You offer more for me than
I could ever ask for.
I praise you that "those who seek You
lack no good thing" (Psalm 34:10b).
You always give your best to Your children.
Empty me of me so I can be filled with
more of You. Draw me to Your
banqueting table that I may
daily feast on the richest of fare.
Forgive me that I have ever
feasted at any other table but Yours.
Thank You for the privilege of
praying for others that You
desire to touch. Open my mouth
that I may feast on You, my ears
that I may always listen to You,
and my heart that I may always
be responsive to You.
To the glory and praise of Your Name.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.***

CRUCIFIED – Day 7:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 7:25-36

If there is anything we have gleaned from our first week together on this 40 day journey it is this: Jesus is our life! He is our necessary food; for without Him we have no life in us. His work on the cross delivered us from death unto life; and His continued work in us through the presence and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit enables us to experience the full and abundant life He has promised us (reference John 10:10). There is nothing else we need except for an intimate and abiding relationship with the Lord. When we seek Him first we have the guarantee of everything else we need (Matthew 6:33).

***“Give me neither poverty nor riches,
but give me only my daily bread.”
(Proverbs 30:8b)***

The Lord’s great desire is that we know Him. Throughout the pages of Scripture we read account after account of how God revealed Himself to His people in miraculous and monumental ways, and also through difficulty and discipline; to show Himself, not only to His beloved and chosen people, but also to reveal Himself to the nations. Every action taken on behalf of His people Israel was used to confirm to His people that He is a faithful and trustworthy God, but also used to gain the attention of the unbelieving world that they would acknowledge Him and to follow Him also.

Jesus stepped down from His heavenly throne to personally show us the greatness of God’s love. The Lord wasn’t going to take any chance of us missing the message He had for us by sending any other messenger, or by displaying another wonder; No! He was going to take it upon Himself to deliver this message personally. This message was far too important to be entrusted into the hands of anyone else but God Himself.

***“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.”
(John 3:16)***

In Jesus’ day, there were many learned scholars and teachers of the law, noted authorities on the Scriptures who knew the law and the prophets. They thought they knew who God was, they had all the knowledge of God, so surely they would be able to identify Him when He arrived on the scene. The problem was, they didn’t really know Him at all. ***“Yes, you know Me, and you know where I am from. I am not here on My own, but He who sent Me is true. You do not know Him, but I know Him because I am from Him and He sent Me”*** (John 7:28-29).

Saul of Tarsus was a man who thought he knew God. He had been taught by the greatest teachers and was zealous for God (reference Philipians 3:5-6). But it wasn’t until the Lord revealed Himself to him personally that he realized he didn’t really know God at all. ***“Saul, Saul,***

why do you persecute Me?’ ‘Who are you, Lord?’ Saul asked. ‘I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting...’ (Acts 9:4-5). All this time Saul thought he was doing the work of God, but his divine encounter with the living Lord proved that he was actually hurting God. There are some in the church today who believe they are working for God and doing good for the kingdom all the while living personal lives that offend God. What they have to offer is poisonous fruit that is making the church sick; but the work is so subtle that many can’t put a finger on where their lethargy and apathy are coming from. ***“Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!’”*** (Matthew 7:22-23). Charles Spurgeon has said, “We slander God by our very eagerness to work for Him without knowing Him.” If we knew God, really knew God, we couldn’t stand in the pulpit, kneel at the prayer altar, or take any other position in the church without taking stock of our personal holiness. The power has gone out from much of the church because our prayers are being hindered by the sin that has infiltrated the house of God.

***“These people come near to Me with their mouth
and honor Me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from Me.
Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men.
Therefore once more I will astound these people
with wonder upon wonder;
the wisdom of the wise will perish
the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish.”***
(Isaiah 29:13-14)

Saul of Tarsus was profaning the name of God by claiming to be working in God’s name. He was killing the work of God, instead of contributing to God’s Kingdom. When the scales finally fell of his eyes, Paul, saw clearly that the One he had been previously persecuting was indeed the promised, and risen, Christ (reference Acts 9:18-22). From that moment on he, ***“resolved to know nothing...except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”*** (1 Corinthians 2:2). Before he came in contact with the resurrected Christ, Paul was unknowingly serving Satan’s purposes to destroy the work of God. The Lord radically intercepted his life and called him out to be His “chosen instrument” to carry His name to those who are blind as he himself once was.

Saul yielded to Christ, and the Lord broke the chains of religious spirit that bound him. Saul had been living as a slave to the religious system until Jesus entered His life and set him free and he became sold out for Christ. Jesus came to, ***“Preach good news to the poor...to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed”*** (Luke 4:18). It is only the redeeming power of Christ’s death and resurrection that sets us free. He came to set us free from the chains that bound us to the world, so we can be sent out proclaiming the glorious name of Jesus Christ. He saved us and then gave us the key to set the world free: ***“to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke...”*** (Isaiah 58:6). We must be fully yielded to God ourselves before we can be of any use to His kingdom. Paul experienced the power of the cross and it dramatically changed the course of his life. Ask the Lord to show you any part of your life that is not fully yielded to Him so that nothing, including yourself, will prevent you from experiencing His redeeming power in your life.

***“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.
What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the
surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord...”***
(Philippians 3:7-8a)

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read John 7:37-39

Jesus showed up halfway through the Feast of Tabernacles to teach in the temple (reference John 7:14). His presence was divinely orchestrated as this Jewish celebration commemorated God’s provision and goodness during the desert wanderings. There is no coincidence with God. He is Sovereign and His Son was sent at the appointed time. ***“In that day I will restore David’s fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins and build it as it used to be”*** (Amos 9:11). The Jews, at that time, were looking for a political Messiah to set them free from the oppression of Rome; Jesus came as a personal Messiah to set them free from a greater oppressor – sin and death.

Jesus had come, not to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them (reference Matthew 5:17). His presence in the temple that week was meant to open their eyes to see the glorious new future that God had sent Him to provide for them. ***“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up: do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland”*** (Isaiah 43:18-19). On the final day of the Feast, Jesus shared the good news of the promised provision of the new covenant: ***“If anyone is thirsty, let Him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him”*** (John 7:38). The Jews were looking back on God’s great provision when they had been set free from bondage in Egypt; now right before their eyes God was unveiling their future and telling them of an even far greater provision. ***“Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life”*** (John 4:14b). The promise was before them, but many would remain deaf and blind.

***“Righteous Father, though the world does not know You,
I know You, and they know that You have sent Me.
I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known
in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and that
I Myself may be in them.”
(John 17:25-26)***

Jesus’ disciples would eventually gain full understanding of who He is and why He had come. As He prayed, Jesus expressed a desire for deep mutual understanding and knowledge between the Father, Himself, and His disciples. Our entire concept of God is completely distorted apart from the person and work of Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is vital that we know Him. He came to reveal the love of God, expressed through the Son, so that His love might abide in them. ***“No one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him”*** (Matthew 11:27b).

Until we personally take the time to dig into God’s Word and dig up the treasure that is waiting there for ourselves we will never truly know God as we should. The Lord wants a personal

relationship with each of His children and has given us His Holy Spirit as a personal tutor to guide us into deeper knowledge of Who He is. May we tap into this well of living water and drink deeply so we will be refreshed as we grow in the greater knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 150

We have so much to be thankful for, so many reasons why we should praise the Lord. We are the recipients of this great gift that Jesus Christ shared with those listening that day in the temple. He has opened our blind eyes and our deaf ears and, we, like Paul, have been set free. Praise God for His goodness and love that He pours into our lives. We were once lost, but are now found. We were once bound, but are now set free. The chains of this world don't bind us. We are just pilgrims passing through on our way to a glorious new kingdom, but while we are here His praise and the proclamation of His Great Name should be always upon our lips because there are many more people who need to hear of His wondrous good news.

This evening take time to write out all the ways you have experienced God's goodness in your life this week. The ways He has revealed Himself to you – and also the way He has opened your eyes and ears to receive that understanding. He gave us the gift of the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth and to lead us into all understanding; if not for the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives we would not even have an appetite for God's Word, and certainly no key to unlock its understanding. God has provided everything we need to live, walk, and grow in our relationship with Him. How truly blessed we are! Tonight, thank the Lord for His constant and abiding love in your life and for continuously drawing You to Him.

***“Praise the LORD.
Praise God in His sanctuary;
praise Him in His mighty heavens.
Praise Him for His acts of power;
praise Him for His surpassing greatness.”
(Psalm 150:1-2)***

***Heavenly Father,
I praise you for the breath I have to breathe today.***

May every breath I take in remind me of how gracious and good You are, and may I not waste a single breath on anything that is not worthy of You and Your holiness.

Let every breathe be filled with what is "true...noble...right...pure...lovely...admirable...excellent...praiseworthy" (Philippians 4:8).

I want to breathe in You so that when I exhale it is the breath of God that comes out of me to touch the world with Your truth.

I, like Your servant Paul, want nothing else but You. There is nothing like the "surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord."

Everything else is garbage compared to knowing You; remove all that refuse from my life so I will be completely Yours.

Thank you for revealing Yourself to me and counting me worthy of being Your child.

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3)

"Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore" (Psalm 113:2).

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

CRUCIFIED – Day 8:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 1:1-14

With a simple spoken word, God brought everything into being: “**‘Let there be light,’ and there was light**” (Genesis 1:3). Before God’s work even began the light had to be turned on. Light is the first element of life – it is necessary for the production, function and growth of every living thing – and it was birthed out of the mouth of God. **“Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of men”** (John 1:3-4). Fast forward a few thousand years, and the Word that was with God in the beginning would cast light on the most substantial work of God in human history. **“The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world”** (John 1:9).

When God first spoke light into the world He illuminated the darkness to begin His great work of creation; centuries later when Jesus stepped into the world He illuminated the dark recess of men’s hearts to finish His work through His work on the cross. **“He called you out of darkness into His glorious light” (1 Peter 2:9)**. The Lord had purposed that His beloved creation would live in the light, but when sin entered the world the earth became filled with darkness. The light that was necessary to cut through the dark veil covering the eyes of mankind would require more

than flicking on a switch; this time the Light from God would do more than shed light on darkness, it would slay that darkness and set mankind free from its bondage to sin and the judgment of death. ***“The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work”*** (1 John 3:8b)

***“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.”
(Isaiah 9:2)***

Mankind was being robbed of the life that God intended for them to experience by an enemy who hates God and loves darkness; the devil works diligently to keep God’s creation buried under the cloak of sin and death. Jesus came to shine light into the darkness and personally deliver mankind from the chokehold of sin; offering them the opportunity to experience the blessed and full life that He had always intended His beloved creation to enjoy. Jesus radiated the light of heaven into the dark recesses of the earth to lift the veil that was blocking man’s view of holy God and the life that was available to them. He then went to the cross to once and for all destroy the enemy’s work and rescue His beloved creation from living their lives in the fearful state of darkness, separated from the God that loved them. ***“...the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining”*** (1 John 2:8b).

Jesus’ Presence in the earth cast light into the darkness and illuminated our hearts to see more of God than we had ever previously had the opportunity to experience. He peeled off the blinders of our eyes and allowed us to see the brutal reality of the deep darkness that we were trapped in and that was suffocating us from experiencing the true life He had purposed for us. ***“We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth”*** (John 1:14).

This week, as we walk in the glorious light of salvation, that has been bought for us by the precious blood of our great Light and Lord, Jesus Christ, let us not fail to fuel that light with the lamp that we have been given, the Word of God (reference Psalm 119:105). ***“You are my lamp, O LORD; the LORD turns my darkness into light”*** (2 Samuel 22:29). His light, that has been placed within us, can grow dim to the world if we fail to dwell in His life-giving Presence on a daily basis. Thank Him for shedding His Light into the dark recesses of your own sinful heart and for His priceless gift of Salvation. Ask the Lord to shine His light upon you and examine your heart to see if there is anything hidden that needs to come out so that His light will radiate brilliantly through you for the world to see. Continue to pray for those who are still trapped in the shackles of sin that they might be responsive to the Light of Christ; pray that the Spirit would draw them out of the dark shadows of their sin into the glorious light of Christ. While you pray, keep radiating for Him!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 2 Corinthians 4:6

Sin is a destructive and evil force that has robbed mankind of his innocence as well his ability to experience the blessings of living in the Presence of God. When sin enter the world mankind was

faced with the judgment of death and forced out of the garden where he would be prevented from eating from the tree of life. ***“After He drove man out, He placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life”*** (Genesis 3:24).

God’s decision to banish mankind from the garden was a gift of mercy as He did not want His beloved creation to be perpetually trapped in his sinful state for all eternity. God had in mind how He would remedy this tragic blemish in history, but man would have to endure until the appointed time. ***“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God”*** (Revelation 2:7). Man would be given the opportunity to eat once again from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but only after the Son of God was nailed to it and His blood shed upon it for the sinful disobedience of mankind. ***“For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes”*** (1 Corinthians 11:26). Jesus would redeem His creation from the terrible results of their sin, by laying down His life as the only spotless, sinless sacrifice – thereby turning back the kingdom clock, returning to the Garden, and making the appropriate choice for mankind that he was powerless to make when temptation was placed before him that fateful day. Jesus stepped in and cast His glorious Light on the enemy’s lie and rescued mankind from an eternity separated from God.

One day we will sit under the tree of life in the garden of our God when we enter eternity, but while we wait for that glorious day we have been given ever opportunity to eat from God’s tree of life today. ***“Blessed is the man who finds wisdom...She is a tree of life to those who embrace her; those who lay hold of her will be blessed”*** (Proverbs 3:13a-18). If Adam and Eve had to do it all over again they most assuredly would choose the way of wisdom. To avoid the moral pitfalls of life we should seek after the wisdom of God. ***“The fear of the Lord – that is wisdom and to shun evil that is understanding”*** (Job 28:28). Wisdom begins with the fear of the Lord (reference Proverbs (9:10a). Loving reverence for our God is the basis of wisdom – our desire to live by wisdom expresses to God our desire to live our lives centered on His purposes and our willingness to trust Him as the source of our life and security.

***“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’
made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of
the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”
(2 Corinthians 4:6)***

The Spirit of the Lord provides us wisdom to make wise choices and to live a meaningful, purposeful life to the glory of God (reference Isaiah 11:2). Jesus came to cast light into the darkness and to plant within us a seed of perpetual light that would guide us with wisdom to live lives of holiness and fruitfulness. ***“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of His splendor”*** (Isaiah 61:3cb). The Lord has given us everything we need to make the right choices, avoid the traps the enemy sets for us, and imitate the surrendered and victorious life He exemplified for us. May we ***“be careful then, how [we] live – not as unwise but as wise...”*** (Ephesians 5:15).

George W. Ford has said, “It is not guided missiles, but guided morals, that is our great need today.” We need wisdom to keep us from stumbling into the traps of sin that Satan has set for us. May we look to the Lord as our light to illuminate our path and clear the obstacles out of our way so we won’t stumble and fall as we make our way to the finish line. ***“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”*** (Psalm 119:105). A great way to gain wisdom for life is to study one Proverb a day each month – there is a reason the Lord put 31 Proverbs in the Bible.

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 8

When Moses asked the Lord to show him His glory, the Lord passed in front of him, proclaiming, ***“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin”*** (Exodus 34:6-7). The Lord doesn’t want to hide anything from His children. He is willing to reveal Himself to those who fervently seek Him. ***“Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know”*** (Jeremiah 33:3). The Lord wants to make Himself known, because His desire is to draw all men to Himself (reference John 12:32). ***“...Who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth”*** (1Timothy 2:4).

This evening as we focus on the next attribute of perfect praise: *Glory*, let us offer up a prayer of praise that through Jesus Christ we have been given the profound privilege of seeing and experiencing the glory of God (reference John 1:14). As we meditate on Psalm 8 let us thank Him that we get to share in His glory. May our lives be a sweet reflection of His glory to the world!

***“O LORD, our God,
how majestic is Your name in all the earth!
You have set Your glory above the heavens.
What is man that You are mindful of him,
the son of man that You care for him?
You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings
and crowned him with glory and honor.”
(Psalm 8:1, 4-5)***

***Heavenly Father,
“You have delivered me from death,
and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before You in the light of life”
(Psalm 56:13)
Thank you for calling me out of darkness
into Your glorious light.
(1 Peter 2:9)
May I radiate Your light and love
to the world, that they would
be drawn to You and not hindered by me.
Thank You for the wisdom of Your***

*Word that lights my path
and allows me to walk in all Your ways.
May Your name be glorified in
all I say and do.
I will praise you, O Lord my God,
with all my heart;
I will glorify Your name forever.”
(Psalm 86:12)
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

CRUCIFIED – Day 9:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 3:14-21

The Lord had in mind, from before He laid the foundation of the earth, how He would redeem His fallen creation. He is Sovereign God, after all; He knew before breathing life into His beloved creation, that, given a free will, they would inevitably choose self over God. The first man and woman failed to trust God; they failed to believe God's spoken Word. They **“exchanged the truth of God for a lie”** (Romans 1:25a). Praise God He loves His creation far too much to leave us to ourselves. Instead of passing sentence and allowing mankind to perish in its' disobedience and sin, He graciously and mercifully provided a Savior in His One and Only Son.

***“For God did not send His son into the world to condemn the world,
but to save the world through Him.”
(John 3:17)***

The moment Adam and Eve gave in to their flesh they found themselves completely exposed. **“You may be sure that your sin will find you out”** (Numbers 32:23). They realized right away that they were naked. Once covered in the glory of God, they now were draped in a cloak of sin and shame. When the Lord stepped into the garden to walk in the cool of the day, the presence of His light was too much to bear and they ran into hiding, dressed in their own handmade camouflage (reference Genesis 3:7-8). **“Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?”** (Jeremiah 23:24a). The ugliness of their flesh was fully exposed as they faced the judgment of God. For the time being, however, the Lord would supply them with a garment of animal flesh as a covering for their sin (reference Genesis 3:21). Their flesh needed to be put to death, but God mercifully spared them, and instead put an animal to death in their place; this would become the basis for the sacrificial system the Israelites would observe that would provide a foreshadowing of the promise of a future Sacrifice that would restore their glory that they had been tragically stripped of.

***“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world,
but men loved darkness instead of light
because their deeds were evil.”
(John 3:19)***

God's judgment would come at the appointed time, but first on the kingdom calendar is salvation. ***"In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent. For He has set a day when He will judge the world with justice by the man He has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising Him from the dead"*** (Acts 17:30-31). Our righteous and merciful Judge responded to our need in the most unexpected and extraordinary way: in Love! ***"For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it"*** (John 12:47b). How great the love of God is that He would go to such lengths to rescue us from the dark shadows of sin and death; in contrast, though, how foolish is mankind that we prefer the darkness over His glorious light. ***"Everyone who does evil hates light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed"*** (John 3:20). How far we have fallen from our once glorious state, and yet our God won't let us out of His grasp until we are restored to our right position in Christ Jesus. ***"Repent! Turn away from your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die...For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!"*** (Ezekiel 18:30b-32).

***"But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved."
(Ephesians 2:4-5)***

Salvation is a gift from God. We certainly have done nothing to deserve it; and there is nothing we can do to earn it. We are simply called to believe. ***"...that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life"*** (John 3:16b). This is the costly mistake that Adam and Eve made; they did not believe God. They foolishly rejected His truth and trusted in their own flesh; giving birth to the dreadful consequence of sin: death. Jesus Christ came to draw men out of the darkness and into His glorious light, by offering His own flesh as a substitutionary sacrifice to fill that terrible abyss that separated sinful man from holy God. All the work we are required to do is this: to believe in the One who gave up everything to stand in our place and endure the suffering we deserved, so we could end up with everything we don't deserve – forgiveness of sin, salvation, and eternal life! ***"The work of God is this: to believe the One he has sent"*** (John 6:29).

***"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."
(John 5:24)***

The Lord does not want mankind to perish, but for all to believe in Him and the One who sent Him (reference 1 Timothy 2:4). We cannot know the Father apart from Jesus Christ. Jesus' work on the cross re-established that vital connection that was broken when mankind sinned. When we refuse to believe God and the work He has done on our behalf we are turning our noses up at Holy God; disrespecting Him and rejecting His great offer of love and forgiveness. No other god has laid down his life for his people, offered forgiveness of sins, or the promise of eternal life; only Jesus Christ has done that. Yet instead of dying to receive this wondrous gift, the world disdains the work of God. By refusing to believe they seal their own fate. ***"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him"*** (John 3:36). This is a frightening prospect for those we have witnessed to who adamantly refuse to accept the love of Christ.

Today would be a good day to reflect on that moment you came to salvation. Who or what led you to that point where light was shed on the sinfulness of your heart and you, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit, did not reject God, but instead received Him into your life? Allow His light to shine into your heart today to reveal those areas of compromise and sin that you have let linger around to long or have welcomed in. You may have to sit awhile under the bright light of His

holiness before some of the sin will surface; unfortunately sin has its own form of judgment in that it gradually waxes acceptable until it is no longer recognized as sin. During this journey, as we confront the cross of Jesus Christ, let us get serious (and honest!) about our sin and drag it once and for all into the light – admit your guilt and wait for the gavel to fall – remembering that He took your punishment and now offers you freedom and life! ***“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery”*** (Galatians 5:1).

Praise God that today, because of His great sacrifice on the cross, we have crucified the flesh and been, ***“clothed with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness”*** (Isaiah 61:10a). He has given us a glorious new garment to wear, therefore let us not pick up the rags of our former self and be dragged down into the dark pit of sin. We are children of the reigning and victorious King of Kings who spared nothing to give us the keys to the treasure of His kingdom and has unlocked for us a storehouse of spiritual blessings; why then would we choose to live as paupers in this present world, feasting on the bread crumbs of carnality, instead of living as prince and princesses, feasting at the banqueting table of the King and desiring to share the abundance of our blessings with a world that is in great need. The world is in great turmoil today and disaster seems to be striking every day. Pray for those who are faced with desperation and despair to experience the peace and hope that comes from stepping into the Light of Christ! Open their eyes that they may see You, Lord, as You have shown Yourself to me!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read John 3:1-12

Mankind was God’s crowning achievement in His work of creation. God intended for man to display the glory of God – we were made in His image and given authority to rule on the earth. We were ***“crowned with glory and honor”*** (Psalm 8:5b). But our royal position was stripped from us when we allowed selfishness to enter our hearts and we turned our backs on our King to feast on a fleshly and deadly substitute.

The Lord stepped off of His heavenly throne to rescue us and restore us to our rightful position as the royal and redeemed children of the King of Kings. He achieved this by destroying sin and death, and providing us a “new birth”, through His work on the cross. When the scales fell of Saul of Tarsus’ eyes (reference Acts 9:18-22), his heart was awakened to the knowledge of the One that he thought he knew. In the light of the cross and resurrection, however, Saul, called Paul, was confronted with the sinfulness of his own heart and realized that the work he was doing for God, was destroying the kingdom, not building it. The work of God that God desired was ***“to believe the One He had sent”*** (reference John 6:29). Paul’s divine encounter with the living God led him to believe!

***“I tell you the truth,
no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.
I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God
unless he is born of water and spirit.
Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit.”
(John 3:3, 5-6)***

Jesus met with another Pharisee named, Nicodemus, and revealed to him the way into the Kingdom of God was through a new birth. Like many of the people Jesus had talked to, Nicodemus did not fully understand what Jesus was teaching him. Nicodemus needed spiritual eyes to see and understand the spiritual matters that Jesus had presented to him. The light of Jesus was illuminating the way and revealing that we have the divine privilege of being born again and being adopted into the family of God. ***“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God”*** (John 1:12-13). The gift Jesus offered Nicodemus required childlike faith and understanding, a sense of wonder, trust and acceptance (reference Matthew 18:3). All that was required was for him to believe in the One he was talking to.

***“Repent and be baptized, every one of you,
in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.
And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”
(Acts 2:38)***

The glory of God would be revealed by this new birth that Jesus was offering. Jesus, Himself, was born of “flesh and blood” but He was perfectly sinless. We, having been born, at first, of “flesh and blood,” must now experience a rebirth by “water and the Spirit” so that the corrupt, weak, sinful flesh is washed away by the pure, holy, blood of our sacrificial Lamb. ***“He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life”*** (Titus 3:5b-7).

***“Now the Lord is Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom.
And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory,
are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory,
which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.”
(2 Corinthians 3:17-18)***

We, as believers and followers of Jesus Christ, have been made partakers of God's glory and have experienced a rebirth through belief and acceptance of Christ's redemptive work on the cross. As the recipients of His extraordinary and costly gift we have been given His light to reflect God's glory to the world. Unfortunately, the passion and fervor that we once had with the Lord has waned in many hearts and has hindered the impact of the church. Many believers have been enticed away from intimacy with God to indulging in the carnal pleasures of the world; much like the Israelites did in the Old Testament. We have been feasting off of the world's table and find ourselves too full to feast at the King's table. We have become gluttons of the flesh, having stifled the work of the Spirit within us because we have neglected the more important matters of the ministry of the Word of God and prayer (reference Acts 6:4).

Jesus came to revive our hearts and breathe new life into His beloved creation and He laid down His life to open the way for us to experience this “new birth.” Revival must precede reformation. Jesus first saved us then deposited His Spirit within us to enable and empower us live out the glorious new life. Vision is critical to any building project. We are all a necessary and vital part of God's kingdom building program. We are His body; if any part is weak the whole body is weak. Our nourishment comes from His Word and our strength comes from spending time with the Lord in prayer. It is critical that the children of God recognize that we have lost our focus and fervor and have neglected our First Love and are not nurturing our relationship with Him as we should (reference Revelation 2:4-5). It is time to repent and return to the Lord with all our hearts so we can get back to the work of His Kingdom – which is all about believing in the work He has already done! May our response to repent and return to the Lord with wholehearted devotion be the

catalyst to opening the eyes of the unbelieving world to the glory of God! Write a prayer of repentance today.

***“...will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious?
If the ministry that condemns men is glorious,
how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!”
(2 Corinthians 3:8-9).***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 19

We revere God with our obedience. Our obedience is expressed as we become diligent students of His Word, passionate intercessors for His kingdom, alert spiritual warriors who flee from the temptations of the world, priests who live lives of personal holiness, and faithful ambassadors sharing the good news of the gospel with others. We glorify the Lord with the way we choose to live our lives; and its through the power of His Holy Spirit that we are enabled to do any of these.

This evening as we come before the Lord in worship and praise let us be mindful that while we may glorify Him with our lips, it is important that we bring glory to Him with our lives. He suffered and bled and died so we could experience the “new birth,” and has given us all the power and tools we need for living lives that reflect His glory to the world. Let us offer up a prayer of gratitude for the work He has done on our behalf to redeem us from our sinful state and restore us to a place of glory in His Kingdom. He alone is worthy to receive glory and honor and praise. We have done nothing. He has done everything. Praise Him for the wondrous expression of His love that led you into the light of His salvation. Let every day be an offering of praise as you live your life for His glory in every arena He places you in.

***“The law of the LORD is perfect,
reviving the soul.
The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy,
making wise the simple.
The precepts of the Lord are right
giving joy to the heart.
The commands of the Lord are radiant,
giving light to the eyes.
May the words of My mouth
and the meditation of my heart
be pleasing in Your sight,
O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.”
(Psalm 19:7-8, 14)***

*Heavenly Father,
"I lift up my eyes to You,
to You whose throne is in heaven"
(Psalm 123:1)
Thank You for choosing me to be Your child
and for giving me this new life in Christ.
Help me to always look to You with childlike
faith and wonder as I delight in spending time
with my "Daddy"; and as You open up Your
Word to me to teach me Your truth
and lead me down paths of righteousness
for Your name's sake (Psalm 23:3).
Thank You for the Presence of Your Holy Spirit
in my life who first opened my heart
to believe and receive You
as my Savior; and for Your
continued Presence in my life who opens
my mind to greater understanding
and allows me to see You work more clearly.
May I always be a diligent student
and a faithful servant who will share
Your food with those You place in my path.
May Your Body be strengthened to
stand firm in the days ahead
and may we radiate your light and glory
to the world that all men might come to the
Light of Your salvation.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

CRUCIFIED – Day 10:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 8:12-18

The first order of Creation was God's spoken and creative word: **"Let there be light"** (reference Genesis 1:3). In that moment the light was turned on for God to begin His creative work.

God spared no detail as He went to work painting a glorious picture of His “eternal power and divine nature” in every brushstroke of His glorious Creation. God purposed that His crowning work, mankind, would find great pleasure in discovering the intricacies of every living thing as they spent their time growing in the knowledge and understanding of God through His creative work. **“For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities – His eternal power and divine nature – have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse”** (Romans 1:20). The light that God had provided for His creation illuminated the “natural” eyes of mankind and awakened within man a natural desire for learning. The entire landscape of God’s creation provided one gigantic scientific laboratory begging for discovery. Every aspect of life was open to discovery and the deeper mankind dug to uncover the handiwork of God, the closer they were meant to come to their Creator.

Unfortunately, in man’s innate quest for knowledge he was led to worship the “created” thing rather than the “Creator”; a simple deceptive nudge that turned the focus from God to self, caused man to question the One who had created him, and exposed his “natural” eyes to a darkness and evil God never intended for him to see. Immediately man’s flesh was exposed and their glory was covered with the skin of an animal. **“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the created things rather than the Creator – who is forever praised. Amen”** (Romans 1:25). Instead of being adorned in the garment of God’s glory, a representation of their Creator and the One they were supposed to worship, man would now be subjected to wear the created thing they had chosen to worship. God made for them a garment of animal flesh to cover their sinful human flesh – and from now on they would wear their sin on their sleeve, so to speak. **“...My people have exchanged their Glory for worthless idols”** (Jeremiah 2:11). The same lie of the enemy continues to perpetuate today as mankind continues to look to nature for the answers to life’s problems rather than the One who gave life in the first place. One need only look to the natural landscape today, which is in upheaval, to realize that Someone else is most definitely in control; the sooner we fix our eyes on our Creator and Savior the better off we will be! **“When the earth and all its people quake, it is I who hold its pillars firm”** (Psalm 75:3).

Jesus came to the earth to bring the “true” light of heaven. **“The true light that gives light to every man”** (John 1:7,9). He flipped the “spiritual” light switch that allowed mankind to see their Creator in a “new” light. Only through Jesus Christ can we see the Father as He was meant to be seen. The “spiritual” light that Jesus brought to the world provided a heavenly “Lasik” surgery which would miraculously transform our once spiritually blind “natural” eyes into “spiritual” eyes; providing those who would believe with 20/20 vision to see and know our Heavenly Father as He had always purposed for us to see.

**“I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life.”
(John 8:12)**

Through their disobedience, Adam and Eve unlocked the door to the terrible abyss of spiritual darkness where all manner of evil, falsehood, immorality, corruption, sin and death dwell. Thankfully, our Sovereign God had in mind all along how He was going to deal with that deceptive snake (reference 1 John 3:8). The devil, or “father of lies”, is the great instigator of sin (reference John 8:44b). This enemy of God has been “sinning since the beginning” and having poisoned God’s kingdom with his own arrogance and rebellion, God cast him out (reference Luke 10:18). This deceptive, “artificial light,” would continue to wreak havoc and deceive mankind until that appointed day when the “true Light” of the world would drive him out (reference John 12:31). Praise God! For today, we live on the other side of that victory! God has uncovered the devil’s deceptive deeds, and having radiated His own glorious Light into the darkness, has triumphed over the enemy! We have no reason to fear the devil, sin, or death – these great enemies of God and man have already been defeated through Christ’s redemptive work on the cross.

Take time this morning to offer a prayer of praise to God who, because of His great love for us and His willingness to lay His life down on the cross for our sin, we have no reason to ever fear of walking in darkness or of wearing a cloak of our sin and shame again. Jesus is our light and He has opened our eyes to see the love of the Father who has spared nothing in His desire to restore us to our former glory so that we would fix our eyes upon the Lord and live our lives for His glory! Thank you, Jesus, for the “spiritual” eyes you have given me, and the fresh vision of your glory you have allowed me to see today! Today and forever, **“my eyes are ever on the Lord,”** for His eyes are always upon me (reference Psalm 25:15).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Proverbs 4

Jesus came into the world to provide the light necessary to open our “spiritual” eyes so that we could see God the Father and illuminate for us the way of life. **“For You have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life”** (Psalm 56:13). The necessary switch to turn that light on, as we studied yesterday, is to **“believe in the One He has sent”** (John 6:29). The first step towards experiencing the full and blessed life that God had intended for us in the beginning, before sin added its’ stain to God’s creative masterpiece, is to believe in Jesus Christ. To believe that He is the Son of God sent into the world to save mankind from suffering the penalty of our sin, by offering His own perfect, sinless life as our substitutionary payment on the cross.

Jesus’ obedience to do the Father’s will, by suffering the humiliation of the cross on our behalf, provided us the forgiveness of sin that we needed and saved us from experiencing an eternity separated from God. (Remember, He did absolutely nothing to deserve that brutal punishment – He was innocent! Jesus took it upon Himself and willingly went to the cross because He loves us and desperately wants us to experience the extraordinary fellowship that He has with the Father – pause for a moment and just praise Him for what He has done on your behalf!). **“I have given them the glory You gave Me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and You in Me”** (John 17:22))

Jesus became for us the **“wisdom from God – that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption”** (1 Corinthians 1:30). He opened our eyes to see our Creator in a deeply personal and intimate way; and gave us the vision necessary to live the abundantly full and blessed life the Father desires us to experience. Our Heavenly Father responded in love to His disobedient and rebellious children and gave us His greatest treasure, His One and Only Son, after He had already given us “every good thing” from His creative hand; all because He loves His beloved creation so much and He wants us to enjoy eternal fellowship with Him as He has with His Son. **“...wisdom is proved right by her actions”** (Matthew 11:19b).

God has given us the Spirit of Wisdom to guide us along the path of life (reference Isaiah 11:2). **“When you walk, your steps will not be hampered, when you run, you will not stumble”** (Proverbs 4:12). Walking with our “spiritual” eyes wide open requires wisdom. The Holy Spirit illuminates the Scriptures for us and provides the wisdom we need progress down the path the

Lord has placed before us. ***“Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path”*** (Psalm 119:105). He allows us to see the obstacles before we come upon them. He increases our faith as we stand on His promises and are reminded that He has already gone ahead of us and prepared the way. He gives us courage to face the looming mountains, discernment to avoid the potholes, and wisdom to not stray from the straight and narrow path that leads to life (reference Matthew 7:14). ***“Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men”*** (Proverbs 4:14).

This afternoon, as our natural vision is being bombarded with all the enticements and evils of this present world, let us take a necessary time out and fix our eyes on Jesus and bask in the beauty of the Lord as He shines the light of His Word into our hearts and minds. ***“Let your eyes look straight ahead, fix your gaze directly before you”*** (v.25). He is right in front of you preparing the way for you to walk; ***“making level paths for your feet”*** (v.26a); and ***“keeping your foot from evil”*** (v.27b). And His voice comes behind you as your rear guard telling you the way you should go: ***“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, ‘This is the way; walk in it’*** (Isaiah 30:21). May we not fail in listening and being obedient to His voice. He will never lead us astray, but will guide us straight into the arms of our Heavenly Father where we will bask in the embrace of His love for all eternity. May our obedience to follow Him with wisdom lead others toward that glorious path of life. Offer a prayer of repentance today if you have allowed yourself to become an obstacle in anyone else's path. May the way we live and walk lead others to follow after Christ.

***“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,
and those who lead many to righteousness,
like the stars for ever and ever.”
(Daniel 12:3)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 29

The glorious Light that has come into the world to open our eyes to the extraordinary love of God the Father, and to illuminate our path so we can walk in the light of life, will one day be the only light we will ever need. ***“The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp”*** (Revelation 21:23). May we take advantage of the amazing blessing we have been given to live in the warmth of His glorious light and love while we walk this earth, and take every opportunity to praise Him for this wondrous glimpse of what heaven will be like.

***“Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim You,
who walk in the light of Your Presence, O LORD.
They rejoice in Your name all day long;
they exult in Your righteousness.
For You are their glory and strength,***

***and by Your favor You exalt Your horn.”
(Psalm 89: 15-17)***

This evening, as we lift up our hearts in praise to our great God and Savior for illuminating our “spiritual” eyes to lead us down the path of life and give us a firm place to stand, may we praise Him that He is our Sovereign God and nothing is out of His control. Psalm 29 opens our ears to the sound of creation’s voice as we listen to the majesty and power of our God as His voice leaps off the pages of Scripture. As we listen to His voice, may we also hear His heart for those who are lost and in despair. Let us remember in prayer those across the world who are experiencing the devastating results of the mighty waters. Let us pray for the people of Japan that their “spiritual” eyes would be opened, where many were once blinded, to see ***“The LORD sit[ting] enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever. The LORD gives strength to His people; the LORD blesses His people with peace”*** (Psalm 29:10-11). May they experience the comfort and peace of Almighty God and find assurance and strength in Him in a time of great upheaval and uncertainty.

***Heavenly Father,
“Let the light of Your face shine upon us, O LORD”
(Psalm 4:6)***

***Thank you for illuminating my path to walk
in the light of life. I praise You for
removing the obstacles out of my way
that have made me stumble in the past.
Your Word daily lights my way
help me to be diligent to get
my directions from You each day.
Lead me down paths of righteousness
for Your Names sake that I may glorify
Your holy name with every step.
Help me to never stray from the path
You have purposed for me even when that
path may become rocky and difficult at times.
Increase my faith to see past the mountains that loom
in my way and trust You daily to get me to the
other side of the trials that I face along the way.
Thank you for rescuing me from the darkness
and allowing me the privilege of walking in
Your glorious light. May others see that
I walk with You and desire to follow after You.
It’s in the glorious and holy Name of Jesus
I pray. Amen.***

CRUCIFIED – Day 11:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 9:1-5

Jesus Christ came as the Light of the world to open the eyes of mankind see the love of the Father, Who wanted to rescue His creation from the devastating consequences of sin which would keep man eternally separated from Him and result in death, and provide for them, instead, with the glorious realities of salvation and eternal life with Him in heaven. But not all men would be so receptive to the gracious hand of the Father. Jesus' presence on the earth as ***"the true light that gives light to every man"*** (John 1:9a) would not make Him popular with everyone. The light that illuminated the "spiritual" eyes of man to see their Father in heaven was also the light that exposed man's hidden motives and character. ***"For the LORD searches every heart and understands every motive behind the thoughts"*** (1 Chronicles 28:9b)

***"I have come into the world as a light,
so that no one who believes in Me
should stay in darkness."
(John 12:46)***

Jesus stepped down from His heavenly throne to get up close and personal with mankind. And while the wisdom with which He spoke illuminated the human eye and transformed many of the hearts of those who heard Him teach, it was His compassionate actions expressed toward those in need that grabbed the attention of the people; both positive and negative. When Jesus was questioned by the disciples whose sin caused a certain man to be born blind, Jesus took the opportunity to shed light on their understanding of sin. ***"...this happened so that the work of Him might be displayed in His life"*** (John 9:3b).

Just as fallen man's "spiritually" weakened and sinful state provided the opportunity for God to display His extraordinary love for mankind, so too would man's physically weakened state provide God the platform to display His glory. The Scriptures predicted that the Messiah's ministry would include healing: ***"Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped"*** (Isaiah 35:5). Jesus' ability to heal this man and restore his sight testified to His divine power and added to the mounting evidence that He was in fact who He said He was, the Son of God. The Lord used the weakened physical state of man as an opportunity to reveal His glory. And He continues to do that in many lives today. He performed many healings, especially restoring the sight of the blind, that the "spiritual" eyes of the onlookers would be opened to believe in Him.

***"As long as it is day,
we must do the work of Him Who sent Me.
Night is coming, when no one can work"
(John 9:4)***

Jesus knew His time was short (reference John 7:33), therefore He made every effort to cover as much ground as possible and to touch as many lives as He could. ***"Let us go somewhere else – to the nearby villages – so I can preach there also. That is why I have come"*** (Mark 1:38). His greatest work that would affect the greatest number of people (the whole world!) would soon be accomplished (through the cross). He kept His focus on that most important goal, but, at the same time, made the most of every opportunity to open the eyes and ears of the people – both spiritually and physically – so that the Father might be glorified. The work of God is to believe the One whom He sent, therefore, the work of the One He sent, Jesus, was centered on getting the people to believe in who He was.

***“Are you the one who was to come,
or should we expect someone else?”
Jesus replied, ‘Go back and report to John
what you hear and see: The blind receive sight,
the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured,
the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news
is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man
who does not fall away on account of Me”
(Matthew 11:6)***

Jesus’ ministry on the earth was no less than miraculous. Everything He did was to bring glory to the Father. Every day He met with His Father to receive His instructions for the day and to get the guidance He needed as He walked obediently down the path toward the cross. Trial, suffering, betrayal, and death awaited our Lord, but He fixed His forehead like flint and walked the path before Him just the same. He did everything He could, with the time He had been given, to touch as many lives as possible. As His followers, we, too, must make the most of the time, opportunities, and gifts we have been given to live our lives to the glory of God, that our example would lead other to experience His glory in their own lives. Praise the Lord for light of the morning that signals the start of a brand new day. Thank Him that He has made all things new. May we lay down the burdens of the pain and memory of yesterday, and step into this new day with our eyes wide open and fixed on our gracious and benevolent Heavenly Father who has purposed this day to show us His extraordinary love. Pray that He would give you opportunity today to speak of His wondrous love with someone who has been blinded by the pain and turmoil of their life. May God use you to open their eyes to look upon the One who wants to set them free!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Ephesians 5:8-18

Jesus’ healing of the blind man demonstrated the condition of man before the light of God came into the world. This “physical” healing provided an important illustration to drive home the words that Jesus had been teaching regarding the necessity for man to experience a spiritual “re-birth”. We all are born into this world “spiritually” blind and if not for the light of Jesus Christ we would stumble and fall as we try to make our way through life.

***“For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.
Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all
goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.
Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.
For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret”
(Ephesians 5:8-12)***

The path of our lives has been illuminated by the gift of the Holy Spirit Who has become for us a personal guide in this present world. The Lord opened our eyes to the spiritual realm so that we

would be wide awake and alert to the evils that surround us and be able to avoid the traps the enemy has set to drag us back into the darkened state we had originally been born into. ***“You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled...for God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:5-6, 9).

The man who had been born blind was given a miraculous gift from God. There is no doubt that he had no desire to return to the condition he had been born into. His eyes were finally opened and he looked forward to the future with hope; he did not want to dwell on the darkness of his former life. Unfortunately, there were some who didn't want to let him forget it and dragged him, and his family, in to give an account (reference John 9:13-34). The Lord wants us to walk in the newness of life that He has given us and reflect His light to the world, but we are also cautioned to remain wide awake and alert to those who would drag us into their skeptical, critical, divisive way of thinking. ***“I urge you brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of I people...be wise about what is good, and innocent about what is evil”*** (Romans 16:17-19).

The time we have been given, as we await the return of our Lord, is meant to be spent on promoting His light, not on arguing with the darkness. We must use extreme caution in this present world that we do not get tied up in lengthy conversations and/or arguments with those who are “spiritually” blind. Our words and actions are to illuminate the dark spaces, but we are not to dwell there. The Scriptures tell us that it is *“shameful to even speak of those things.”* We are not to entertain the talk, let alone enter the world of those who live in the darkness (far too many Christians open the door of evil by reading the books, watching the movies, entering the internet sites, tolerating the filthy talk, and walking through the doors of places of evil all in the name of understanding those they are trying to reach; tragically, in their desire to do good all they end up doing is polluting their own minds, and weakening their own walk, and are deceptively led into the pit of darkness and sin themselves). We have been given “spiritual” eyes through the illumination of the Holy Spirit, Who guides us into all understanding through the Word of God, so that by the character and conduct of our lives we bring God's light into the world and help those in the dark find their way to Christ!

***“Be VERY careful, then, how you live –
not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity,
because the days are evil.
Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery.
Instead be filled with the Spirit.
Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.
Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord,
always giving thanks to God the Father for everything,
in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:15-20, emphasis added)***

Our walk and our talk should reflect the light we have been given. Our very presence in the world, if we are walking in the light and living out God's will, will expose the darkness and sin in others. We are to speak only of “spiritual” things and allow the testimony of our lives, as we live it out in the power of the Holy Spirit and producing His fruit (reference Galatians 5:22-23), to provide the necessary contrasting light to draw others into the light of Christ. God did not dictate His love for us, but rather demonstrated it with every word He spoke and every action He took; in doing so, He brought glory to the Father and proved that He was indeed the Son of God. As children of the light we are called to live by His example with the time we have been

given. Let us spend the time we have left focusing on and feasting in the Light of the Lord. It is time we wake up from our slumber and work while it is still day...**"night is coming"** (John 9:4b). This afternoon, while it is still day, take stock of those activities in your life which you have been "entertaining" that have you living too close to the darkness. Today would be a good day to do a "spiritual" and "physical" house cleaning. Some things don't need to be prayed over, they simply need to be thrown out (and that may mean saying goodbye to "unholy" alliances and relationships). **"But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness"** (1 Timothy 6:11). Pray now and ask God to reveal those areas of your life that have been weakening your testimony and witness in the world, and ask Him for the strength and courage to cut out the cancer that is robbing you of spiritual power. The prayer life of the church has been stifled because far too many believers have fallen into the same pit of darkness they have been trying to fight, and many have found themselves trapped in sinful lifestyles and behaviors they once detested and are now too powerless to get out of. Lift up the Body of Christ today and ask God to awaken His Bride to her "spiritual" unfaithfulness; may He open the eyes of His children to recognize the deceptive lies of the enemy that have infiltrated and captivated the hearts and minds of so many believers. May the Lord stir the hearts of every believer to respond to the Light and return to their First Love with the fervency and passion they have been wasting on worldly pursuits; and may we begin to once again tap into the power we have been given through the Holy Spirit to repent of the path we have been walking and return to the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind and strength! May the Lord be glorified as His Bride responds to the truth that her Bridegroom is coming soon and begins to make herself ready – there is no time to waste on any other pursuit but Jesus Christ!

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 66

This evening as we spend our time in worship, praise and adoration of our glorious God and King may we ever be mindful that there is a real spiritual battle going on around us that is subtly robbing the faith and witness of many a once strong believer. It is time for the Bride of Christ to wake up from our slumber and recognize that the battles that are waging in the world have infiltrated the church. May we take a stand now and intercede for believers everywhere to keep our "spiritual" eyes open, so we will stay alert and remain in prayer, and take the necessary action to be purified and prepared, with oil in our lamps, so our light will be shining brightly to pave the way to receive our beloved Bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13)!

***"Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of His name;
make His praise glorious!
Say to God, "How awesome are Your deeds!
So great is Your power
that Your enemies cringe before You.
All the earth bows down to You;
they sing praise to You,***

*they sing praise to Your name. Selah
Come and listen, all you who fear God;
let me tell you what He has done for me.
I cried out to Him with my mouth;
His praise was on my tongue.
If I had cherished sin in my heart,
the Lord would not have listened;
But God has surely listened
and heard my voice in prayers.
Praise be to God,
who has not rejected my prayer
or withheld His love from me!”
(Psalm 66:1-4; 16-20)*

*Heavenly Father,
Thank you for allowing Your light to shine in my heart
and for opening my eyes to see Your glory;
not only in the beauty of Your Creation, but,
more importantly in,
the difficult trial or circumstance that I may be facing.
“Yet this I call to mind and therefore I have hope:
Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed,
for His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.
The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for You.”
(Lamentations 3:21-24)
Lord, I pray that You will be glorified in my life;
in times of weakness and in times of strength.
Help me to make the most of every opportunity
to share and shine Your glorious light
with the people you surround me with.
To You be all glory, honor and praise.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

CRUCIFIED – Day 12:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 9:35-41

As surely as the sun rises each morning, the light of Jesus is shining upon us. His light lifts us out of gloom of doubt and despair and sets us high upon a rock where we can bask in the warmth of His eternal glow. The natural sunlight is a lamp which illuminates the glorious intricacies of God's wondrous creation. The great Artist of the universe spared no detail on His earthly canvas; in sight, in sound, in color, in texture, in movement, in order, in everything; and all of this is just a small sampling of His majestic handiwork. How blessed we are to gaze upon His creative work with our natural eyes – it is a feast for the eyes! But how much more so are we, who have believed in the One who is the “true light” of the world, to have our “spiritual” eyes open to see through eyes of faith the very One whose hand is in every brushstroke. We know, with full assurance, that this is just a taste of the promised kingdom that is to come, as our spiritual eyes and ears are awakened to hear the sound of creation groaning for that glorious day when it, too, will be **“liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into glorious freedom”** (Romans 8:21).

The Light of the world, Jesus Christ, opened our eyes to see the world, in which we live, in a new light. We now, having seen the Father through the light of Jesus, see our present world through the lens of eternity. The spiritual vision we have been given allows us to see all things from a kingdom perspective of which we are now heirs (reference Romans 8:17). **“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!...now we are children of God, and what we will be has not been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies Himself, just as He is pure”** (1 John 3:1-3).

From the moment the blind man received sight from Jesus he was put on trial and asked to give an account of his healing. He had been blind all his life, but when confronted by the Son of God, he was able to see in a way none of the teachers of the law could see. **“Now that is remarkable! You don't know where He comes from, yet He opened my eyes”** (John 9:30). As Christians, we are put under the microscope of the unbelieving world who cannot understand the change that has happened to us because they don't have eyes to see. The man who had been born blind had an eye-opening experience with Jesus Christ and no amount of questioning or criticism was going to lead him to deny what he knew. We too, should **“always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who ask you to give the reason for the hope that you have”** (1 Peter 3:15). The Pharisees rejected the man's testimony and threw him out; they cast judgment on the blind man when they were the ones who were, in fact, blind. This man's testimony was meant to open their eyes to see the Christ, but they rejected God's gift and brought judgment on themselves. **“For judgment I have come into the world so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind”** (John 9:39).

The light of Christ reveals the true nature of men's hearts. Jesus came into the world to meet every human need, but there are some who, in their blindness, can't recognize their need no matter how much light they are exposed to. **“If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains”** (v.41). Man is without excuse as the natural light of the creation reveals God's “eternal power and divine nature” and the light of Christ exposes their sinful nature. Jesus' presence in the world naturally divides the darkness from the light and we will all be given the opportunity to choose sides. May we radiate His light brilliantly while it is still day that all the world will be exposed to His glorious light!

Jesus pursues each one of us personally to open our eyes that we might see Him and believe. The man born blind was rejected by men who claimed to see, but was received by Christ who saw him as He purposed him to be. **“...when He found him, He said, ‘Do you believe in the Son of Man?’** (John 9:35b). **“Then the man said, ‘Lord, I believe; and he worshiped Him”** (v.38). When the blind man's natural eyes had been opened, he was able to testify to the miraculous work of God, but when his spiritual eyes were open he fell down in worship of Holy God. Jesus opens our eyes so we will testify to His love and learn to worship the Creator and not the created thing. God opens our eyes that we might see the one who loves us endlessly. May our day be spent in worship of the One who gives us spiritual eyes to see, Who provides for us

our every need; and not be wasted worshiping the worldly things our natural eyes may deceptively tell us we need!

***“So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but what is unseen.
For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.”
(2 Corinthians 4:18)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Luke 11:33-34

When Adam and Eve rebelled against God in the Garden of Eden they opened all our eyes to see that which is good and evil in the world. Our once pure and innocent eyes have been forever marred by the harsh realities of the carnal world; that is, until Jesus, our Light, stepped into the picture to restore our sight to the place it was always meant to be.

***“Your eye is the lamp of your body.
When your eyes are good, your whole body is full of light.
But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness.
See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness.
Therefore, if your whole body is full of light,
and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted,
as when the light of a lamp shines upon you.”
(Luke 11:33-36)***

God has given us an extraordinary blessing by opening our eyes to see His kingdom. However, this new vantage point we have been given comes with tremendous responsibility. Now that our “spiritual eyes” have been opened we have no excuse for our sin. ***“If I had not come and spoke to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin”*** (John 15:22). We have seen the Light and been set free from the bondage of sin and death. We no longer live in the darkness, but are children of the light. ***It is an offense to God, when we, His children, allow His holy temple (our bodies) to be polluted in any manner by any kind of sin or evil*** (reference 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). We, who have been the recipients of the priceless gift of salvation which caused our Lord to be beaten to a bloodied pulp, having the flesh ripped from His body, and then willingly allowing Himself to be nailed to a cross to suffer the humiliation of man and the rejection of the Father for our sake and to ultimately die in our place, we know better and we are without excuse! We dare condemn the world who dares to profane the name of our holy God, yet fail to see that we have brought judgment on ourselves because we daily profane our beloved Lord with the evil thoughts, immoral activities, unholy talk, and ungodly pursuits that we have allowed to pollute our lives. It is time we recognize the subtle ways in which we have conformed to the patterns of the world (reference Romans 12:2a) and realize it is time the Body of Christ do some necessary spiritual housecleaning and Repent (reference 1 Peter 4:17)!

The real enemy we are fighting is within our own hearts; our devotion has become divided and the world is winning out. We must recognize that our passion for the things of God have waned in the light of the temptations and enticements of the world. It is time to wake up and take the necessary measures to rid our lives of those worldly desires and distractions that are robbing us of the blessing of God, and return to our First Love with wholehearted devotion before our light is forever snuffed out (reference Revelation 2:4-5). As our passion for our Lord is reignited, the carnal desires and worldly lusts which have invaded our lives will begin to diminish and the fire of revival will ignite in our hearts!

The Scriptures tells us that “the eye is the lamp of the body,” therefore it is important that we guard our eyes and be cautious about what we entertain and let in. The lust of the eyes is the starting point for all physical and spiritual adultery. The Lord opened our eyes that we might see Him, but we have wasted so much time looking at the world instead of spending time in His Word, that the light of our spiritual eyes are growing dim. We need to spend less time being fixated on other people’s lives (which reality TV and social media only seeks to encourage) and fix our eyes and devotion on the One who gave us life (we need to take stock of the hours we may be wasting feeding our fleshly fixations – one of which may be social media sites, such as Facebook, which, at face value seem innocent enough, but rob the children of God of valuable face time with the Lord. Someone once said we need to stop spending so much time on Facebook and spend more time with our face in the Book (The Word of God –His Holy Bible) – that is very good advice)!

***“Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they shall see God”
(Matthew 5:8)***

When our desire becomes for the things of God and our hearts seek after that which is pure and holy we are given the promise that we will indeed see God (Matthew 5:8). ***“...whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things”*** (Philippians 4:8). As the children of God, we must become intentional about the things we allow into, and keep out of, our lives. Jesus opened our eyes that we might see God, and His holiness should become our utmost desire and pursuit. The eyes of the Lord are too pure to look on evil and so too should be our eyes (reference Habakkuk 1:3). Our eyes have been opened to gaze upon the holiness of God and anything else should cause us to revile at the sight. ***“Be holy because I, the LORD your God am holy”*** (Leviticus 19:2). Our ability to discern those things which truly profane the name of God and offend His heart has been dulled because we have neglected the all important task of keeping our eyes healthy by spending time on holy pursuits, like spending time with God in His Word and in prayer. We have been given all the light we need to walk out this life to the glory of God – what we need now is good eyes to let His light in and keep the darkness out. Let us therefore pursue that which is good and run from all that is evil. May our eyes be ever on the Lord (Psalm 25:5) as we go about our day, and may we quickly turn our gaze from anything that is unworthy of His holy name. In the book of Job, the servant of God made a “covenant with his eyes” (Job 31:1). Today would be a good day for the children of God to make a covenant such as this so that we become intentional about the things we allow our eyes to see; lest we allow anything or anyone to draw us away from gazing upon our gracious and loving Lord.

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 27

When Jesus entered the temple area to drive out the buyers and sellers and overturned the money changers' tables He quoted the Prophets (reference Matthew 21:12-13): ***“My house will be called a house of prayer.’ But you are making it a ‘den of robbers.’*** “ (Isaiah 56:7; Jeremiah 7:11). The same could be said true of today's churches. We are robbing God of the worship due His name because we have allowed all manner of evil to enter the doorways of His Most Holy Place. The hearts of God's people are not fully devoted to God and are full of all kinds of evil: ***“...evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander”*** (reference Matthew 15:19; Mark 7:21-22); to name just a few of things that we have allowed into our lives that offend our God. It is no wonder the prayer life of the church has become so weak. God will not hear our prayers if are not interested in hearing His Word, and are willing to allow His Body to be polluted with those things He cannot even look upon; and which are far too shameful for us to even speak of (reference Habakkuk 1:13; Ephesians 6:12). We need to purify our hearts if we truly want to see God.

Before we offer a prayer of worship this evening, let us take some time to really take an assessment of our hearts and lives. Let us pray and ask God to shine His light into the dark recesses of our heart and expose those things that we have hidden from Him (He sees it already and knows all that we have done!). Ask Him to not only prick our own hearts to the truth of deception we have allowed into our lives, but to also prick the hearts of all believers and send a spirit of conviction into the spiritually dull eyes and ears of the church, so a renewed sense of offense to the things of the world would stir in our hearts and cause us to rise up and defend the Holy name of our Lord. The Scriptures give us list of vices (reference Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:5; Revelation 22:15) and virtues (reference Galatians 5:22-26; 2 Corinthians 6:6; Ephesians 4:2; 5:9; Colossians 3:12-15) that can help as we pray and ask God to help us conquer those sinful desires as we live out the new life He has given us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Praise God for the gift of His Wonderful Counselor who leads us into all truth and rescues us from the trappings of this evil and deceptive world! May we not reject His promptings as the Pharisees of Jesus' day did.

Spend some time this evening in worship and praise for the liberty and freedom we have received in Christ Jesus. May we, like David (who forcefully and confidently faced that bully Goliath who dared profane the name of His God, and slayed him in the power and praise of God), now, and forever, fix our gaze upon the beauty of our LORD and desire nothing more than to dwell in His Presence all the days of our life and seek Him in His temple. Praise God for this high and holy privilege! Oh that the eyes of the unbelieving world would be opened to see the glorious things which we have been allowed to see! May we live our lives in humility and lead many to the light that He has wrapped so graciously as a cloak around us!

***“One thing I ask of the LORD,
this is what I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the LORD
all the days of my life,
to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD
and to seek Him in His temple.
For in the day of trouble
He will keep me safe in His dwelling;
He will hide me in the shelter of His tabernacle
and set me high upon a rock”
(Psalm 27:4-5)***

*Heavenly Father,
"I lift my eyes to You whose throne is in heaven"
(Psalm 123:1)
"Open my eyes that I may see the wonderful things in Your law."
(Psalm 119:18)
"Turn my eyes away from worthless things and preserve my
life according to Your Word." (v. 37).
Thank You for revealing Yourself to me
and for allowing me the privilege of gazing upon
Your beauty and holiness.
Forgive me that I have ever entertained or allowed
anything unholy to enter the eyes that are
meant for only Thee.
Guard my eyes and help me to daily keep them fixed
on You as I seek to spend time with You
in Your Word and in prayer.
"May the eyes of the hearts of all of Your children
be enlightened to know the hope to which they have
been called, the riches of the glorious
inheritance of the saints" that You have so
graciously bestowed upon us.
(Ephesians 1:18)
Be glorified in all that I watch, see, say, do,
entertain, and pursue – and may my
utmost pursuit and desire always be for You.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Day 13:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 12:37-46

Good Morning, beloved of the Most High God! Do you realize how great the Father's love is towards you? Are you aware that He has already planned and purposed how He is going to show His goodness to you today? **"How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God!"** (1 John 3:1, NIV). I love that the word "lavished" is used in the NIV. To lavish, as defined, means to give or bestow an abundance; to shower; characterized by or produced with extravagance or profusion – as in a lavish buffet. God's love for us is a "lavish buffet" – a feast of epic proportions! Our gracious and benevolent Host and Heavenly Father spared nothing when He offered His Son up as the main course. For the

unbelieving, blind and foolish world that may be a tough pill to swallow, for us, who are being saved, it is the power of God (reference 1 Corinthians 1:18). And we are only at the rehearsal dinner! Can we even begin to grasp what awaits us at the Great Wedding Supper of the Lamb when we will feast at His table and in His Presence? Why then would we want to dine on the carnal crumbs of the world's table? Why would we waste our time eating artificial scraps that do not satisfy? Beloved, we have been invited to dine at the table of the King of Kings and the portion He has placed on your plate today the world does not even have eyes to see, let alone the palate to digest. Lay hold of what He has so thoughtfully prepared for you today; whatever it might be. Enjoy every morsel knowing it went through His hand before it ever got to your plate. He is our eternal cupbearer. Take a moment and say your table grace before He continues to lavish you with His Amazing Grace!

***“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with
every spiritual blessing in Christ.
For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world
to be holy and blameless in His sight.
In love He predestined us to be adopted as His sons
through Christ Jesus, in accordance with His pleasure and will –
to the praise of His glorious grace,
which He has freely given us in the One He loves.
In Him we have redemption through His blood,
the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace
that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
And He made known to us the mystery of His will
according to His good pleasure, which He purposed in Christ,
to be put into effect when the times have reached their fulfillment –
to bring all things in heaven and on earth together
under one head, even Christ.”
(Ephesians 1:3-10)***

Jesus Christ, our glorious light, came into the world so that ***“the blind will see and those who see will become blind”*** (John 9:39b). It is a gift of God's grace that we have been given eyes to see; and as we mature in our walk with Him, and the path before us is further illuminated through the study of His Word, the lens of our spiritual eyes are open to see much more than the handiwork of God in all creation, but more significantly, the profound way in which God works. When that spiritual light bulb turns on we begin to see that God's ways are not our ways. ***“As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts”*** (Isaiah 55:9). God purposed that the cross of humiliation would bring glory, in suffering we would receive salvation, in heartache we would experience healing, in weakness we would find strength, in poverty the greatest riches, and in death we would experience life.

The people saw with their own eyes the miracles that Jesus' performed in their presence (reference John 12:37). God's glory was radiating before them like a great neon sign flashing the message that God was with them, but they refused to believe. God in His Sovereignty knew that they would purpose in their hearts to reject His Son, but He also had planned a higher purpose for their unbelief. ***“He has blinded their eyes and deadened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn – and I would heal them”*** (John 12:40). God, in His supreme justice, chose to harden the hearts of the Jewish people, much like He had hardened the heart of Pharaoh during the Exodus, so that His purposes would be fulfilled for the whole world. God's purpose in choosing Israel out of all the peoples of the earth was that through them His glory would be revealed to the world.

***“I will also make you a light for the Gentiles,
that you may bring My salvation
to the ends of the earth”
(Isaiah 49:6b).***

There are many things the Lord has done and continues to do that we cannot truly understand or grasp; however, He has opened our spiritual eyes so we would know that everything He does is ultimately for our good and His glory. Jesus Christ endured the most extreme rejection, humiliation, and suffering known to man. He suffered, not only the rejection of men, but also the rejection of the Father, that we would never have to face that terrible separation – unless, of course, we choose to. His suffering brought our salvation; and Israel's rejection of Christ opened the door for the rest of the world to have the opportunity to receive Christ. ***“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved...”*** (Romans 11:25-26a). How humbled we should be that there are those who wait in darkness while we waste the Light we have been given. Are we beginning to comprehend the price of the treasure we have been given? There is so much more at stake and there is no more time to waste – the kingdom clock is ticking. Our eyes have been opened that we would see God's great kingdom plan and how exactly we fit in. The light we have been given is meant to be shared. Let us pray for the lost and then go out and lead them to the light. Today and everyday, may we pray for the peace of Jerusalem and daily approach the throne of Grace on their behalf until the Lord ***“establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth”*** (Isaiah 62:7). They are waiting on us; what exactly are we waiting for? It's time to wake up and finish the work we have been called to do (reference Matthew 28:18-20). ***“For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet, till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch”*** (v. 1).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 13:10-23

When Jesus' taught the people of His day He often spoke in parables “because of the spiritual dullness of the people” who did not have ears to hear or eyes to see. The Lord exhorts us to desire deeper understanding of His Word. He wants us to be diligent students who will do the necessary work to dig up the rich treasure that He has waiting for us. He has opened our spiritual eyes to see the greatness of His work, but that does not mean we do not have a responsibility to do some of the work ourselves. We have been given the greatest professor and teacher in the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truth if we are willing to spend the time listening and learning.

***“The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you,
but not to them. Whoever has will be given more,
and he will have an abundance.
Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.”
(Matthew 13: 11-12)***

God has opened our eyes to the secrets of the Kingdom of heaven. We have become privy to the wisdom of God and He will only give us more if we are willing to learn from Him. The mind that God has given us only functions in its' fullest capacity in response to our relationship with God. Because of the light of Christ that illuminates our ability to see His truth we no longer have the mind of the world, **"we have the mind of Christ"** (1 Corinthians 2:16b).

***"So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord,
that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God
because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.
Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality
so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more."
(Ephesians 4:17-19)***

When we allow our minds to be filled with the carnal pleasures and pursuits of the world our spiritual hunger begins to wane. Sin dulls our desire for the things of God. Sin keeps us from coming to His table because we are artificially being satisfied elsewhere. We rob ourselves of the spiritual blessings of God when we waste our time feasting on anything else but Him and risk our hearts being hardened towards Him. The last thing we want is for God to leave us alone because we have chosen to leave Him alone. ***"For although they knew God, they neither glorified Him as God nor gave thanks to Him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened...Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts..."*** (Romans 1:21, 24a). Thankfully, however, when we live in a right relationship with God and experience the daily communion with Him that He desires to have with us we will find the opposite effect – our human desire – for food, sexual pleasure and security – will be dulled; and our spiritual hunger will be satisfied. ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled"*** (Matthew 5:6). There is no substitute for God! Have we not tasted and seen how good our God is (reference Psalm 34:8)? ***"...blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear. For I tell you the truth, many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see but did not see it, and to hear what you hear but did not hear it"*** (Matthew 13:16-17).

How blessed we are to see, and hear, and taste, and know the mind and heart and purposes of God as we do. May we spend the time we have at His table to inquire just a little further, so we will glean all He has for us each and every day and at each and every meal. May we take the time to empty ourselves of the things of this world so we come to His table hungry, ready to be filled. Pray daily for your heart to be sensitive and softened to receive the seed of His Word and to do the necessary cultivating for it to grow into the fruitful tree He intends to feed a hungry and malnourished world.

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 145

This evening, we have much to praise God for. He has indeed blessed us ***“in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing in Christ”*** (Ephesian 1:3). Our plate and our cup overflows with His goodness and love (reference Psalm 23:5, 6). Tonight, take time to look at all the ways you have been blessed. See beyond your circumstances into the many ways God has shown Himself faithful and true. Praise Him for how He has never failed you, but has faithfully carried you through. Thank Him for the wisdom to know that the trial you may be facing was sifted through His loving and compassionate hand to be used for His greater glory in your life and in the lives of so many others. Praise Him for His grace as you pray for another portion to be lavished upon your plate!

***“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all;
He has compassion on all He has made.
All You have made will praise You, O LORD;
Your saints will extol You.
They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom
and speak of Your might,
so that all men may know of Your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.
Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and Your dominion endures through all generations.
The LORD is faithful to all His promises
and loving toward all He has made.
The LORD upholds all those who fall
and lifts up all who are bowed down.
The eyes of all look to You,
and You give them their food at the proper time.
You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing.”
(Psalm 145:8-16)***

***Heavenly Father,
“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!
How unsearchable His judgments,
and His paths beyond tracing out!
Who has known the mind of the Lord?
Or who has been His counselor?
Who has ever given to God that God should repay Him?
For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things.
To Him be glory forever! Amen.”
(Romans 11:33-36)
Thank You for the portion You have placed on my plate,
You knew exactly what I needed to satisfy and sustain me today.
Instill in me a deep hunger for more of You
and protect me from the temptation to fill up
on the artificial substitutes of the world before I even come to You.
Fill my heart and mind with more of You as I sit at Your table and dine with You.
Take pleasure with how I clean my plate***

***and delight in how I continually come back for more.
Be glorified with my life. I desire to be just like You.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.***

Day 14:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: *Feasting in His Presence* – Read Revelation 22:1-7

Two weeks into our journey and the Lord wants His children to know, without a doubt, that He is our Source of Life! He is our Source of everything! He has given us our very life and then stepped into the world to give us an even more abundant, fruitful, and abiding life with the Heavenly Father. His blessings never end! The Lord has shown us that He is the food that sustains us and the Light that leads us, as we walk through this present life with the hope of eternal life with Him.

How blessed we are that today we walk in the light of Christ, much like the Israelites walked through the wilderness with the Lord as their guide. ***“By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night”*** (Exodus 13:21). God has not failed once, throughout history, in getting His people to the appointed place according to His perfect plan; even though the path may have been a little rocky or painful along the way. When we learn to walk with God as our guide and trust Him for the daily bread which He provides we will find ourselves at our appointed destination stronger in faith and in frame than would have ever been possible if we tried to do it on our own.

***“They will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads.
There will be no more night.
They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun,
for the Lord God will give them light.
And they will reign for ever and ever.”
(Revelation 22:4-5)***

God's desire in providing us the Light of His Son was providentially purposed that our eyes would be open to see His glory so that we would learn to trust Him in this life and place our hope in the glorious future He has planned and purposed for us. Today let us fix our eyes on the promise of our eternal home and trust that whatever we face in this lifetime (and we can expect troubles for sure!) He has purposed to draw us closer to Him, and to be the light that illuminates the path for others to believe. May we allow ourselves to be used of Him, however He may choose, and be willing to do the work for Him that He asks of us today. Offer Him a prayer of gratitude for calling you into His glorious light and don't be afraid to let His light shine in all you do and say today. Mother Teresa said, “Words which do not give the light of Christ increase the darkness.” May we take her words to heart as we continue to press in as diligent students of the Word of God so that His Word will become the fuel to our lamp which lights our path and causes the darkness to retreat.

“...giving thanks to the Father,

**who has qualified you to share in the inheritance
of the saints in the kingdom of light.
For He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness
and brought us into the kingdom of the Son He loves,
in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
(Colossians 1:12-14)**

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 5:14-16

In our devotional time yesterday we read that Israel has experienced a hardening “in part” so that the light of Christ could be shared with the whole world. God purposed this “partial” and “temporary” blindness, of His beloved chosen people, to be the vessel He used to open the eyes of the Gentile world to the glorious gift of salvation through Jesus Christ; that through them we would be one in Christ. ***“His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility. He came and preached peace to those who were far away and peace to those who were near. For through Him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit”*** (Ephesians 2:15b-18).

How extraordinary the plans and purposes of God; and we get to be partakers of this glory. We are not to take for granted the Light we have blessed with nor the time we have been given to radiate that Light. ***“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house”*** (Matthew 5:14-15). While we take time to praise God for the light He has given us, we are also called to live out our lives in that Light. Therefore, we must be careful that we don’t waste or neglect the light we have been blessed with by trying to be participants of the world that we are not; the world will only seek to distort and destroy that light. We are exhorted ***“not to conform to the patterns of the world”*** (Romans 12:2a), but rather that the Light of Christ that indwells us would provide a stark contrast to the darkness that surrounds us. God has set us apart as “a city on a hill,” and, as such, His desire is that our lives would be a constant and brilliant reflection of His glorious light in the world; just as it was when He was in it. We are now His ambassadors that carry His torch and He has given us His Holy Spirit to keep it aflame. ***“For this I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God...For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and self-discipline”*** (2 Timothy 1:6-7).

The miracles that Jesus performed while He was on this earth led the people to be “filled with awe” and to “praise God” (reference Matthew 15:31; Luke 7:16; 13:13; 17:15; 23:47). His work gained praise for the Father. His life’s work was to bring glory to the Father and to finish the work the Father had sent Him to do (reference John 4:34). He has chosen us to go and bear fruit and to share His light with a world in need (reference John 15:8). ***“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven”*** (Matthew 5:16). Just as the Father was glorified in the work His Son did, so too will He be glorified in us.

***“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him
who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light...
abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.
Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you
of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God
on the day He visits us.”
(1 Peter 2:9-12)***

As we live our lives in this present world we are to do so being mindful that we are indeed the “light of the world.” It is through us that those living in darkness have any hope of coming to the light of Christ. How vital it is that we don’t hide our light or do anything that would cause that glorious light to be corrupted or dimmed. We are to live righteous and holy lives, ***“not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men”*** (2 Corinthians 8:21); being mindful that how we live our lives will prompt others to praise our Father in heaven! This afternoon may we take the necessary time at the Lord’s table to receive the strength and instruction we need to live our lives according to God’s will and purpose as we feast on His Word, and then may everything we set our hands to do today and everyday bring glory to His name and cause men to stand in awe and praise His wondrous and holy name!

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 18

Our Psalm today is a song of worship and witness. It declares the praises of God who purposed from the very beginning that God’s redemptive work on behalf of His beloved people Israel included also the redemption of the Gentiles. ***“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God’s truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for His mercy...”*** (Romans 15:7-9a). May we humbly accept our commissioning to carry His torch so that His light will continue to radiate throughout the whole earth. Offer a prayer of gratitude for those who through obedience and living godly lives reflected His light and love into our lives that we would be drawn into His glorious light. Praise Him that we have the glorious opportunity to bask in His light and are ignited to share that light with someone who is sitting in the darkness that we once knew. Take them by the hand and say: ***“Come...let us walk in the light of the LORD”*** (Isaiah 2:5).

***“I love you, O LORD, my strength.
The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.
He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.
I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise,
and I am saved from my enemies.
You, O LORD, keep my lamp burning;***

*my God turns my darkness into light.
As for God, His way is perfect;
the word of the LORD is flawless.
He is a shield for all who take refuge in Him.
For who is God besides the LORD?
And who is the Rock except our God?
The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God my Savior!
Therefore, I will praise You among the nations, O LORD;
I will sing praises to Your name.”
(Psalm 18:1-3, 28, 30-31, 46, 49)*

*Heavenly Father,
“You are resplendent with light,
more majestic than mountains rich with game”
(Psalm 76:4)
“You wrap yourself in light as with a garment”
(Psalm 104:2)
And have spread Your radiant cloak around me as the dawn
of a new day.
Thank you for delivering me from the darkness
so that I could walk in Your glorious light.
May every step I take cause others to take notice
and want to walk in the pathway of Your light and life.
How I long for the day when there will be no more
darkness, but all who are Yours will dwell
in Your wonderful Light.
To “God, the blessed and only Ruler,
the King of kings and Lord of lords,
who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light,
whom no one has seen or can see.
To Him be honor and might forever. Amen”
1 Timothy 6:15-16)
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Day 15:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:7

As we begin this next leg of our 40 day journey together we will come to the midpoint our journey. This always seems to present a critical crossroad for many “feasters” who find it challenging at this point to remain steadfast and focused; many wanting to give up, rather than press in to continue to reach the goal. Our goal is Jesus! Let us fix our eyes on Him and press on with perseverance and prayer. As we will find in our study today, the path we have been called to walk, as the children of God, is not easy; in fact, God’s Word tells us emphatically that it is hard. The good news is we were never meant to walk it alone; we were created to walk it with our Lord. The entire purpose of all of our 40 day prayer and fasting journey’s together is to learn to become more dependent upon the Lord. He wants us to depend upon Him. That is why He created us and that is why He saved us – to experience a deep, abiding, intimate union with Jesus Christ. So let us **“press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of [us]”** (Philippians 3:12b) and persevere just a little while longer – I promise it will be worth it. Jesus is most definitely worthy it! Stop for a moment, catch your breath, and pray. He has something wonderful for each one of us today!

Our reading this morning is one short sentence, but it holds tremendous weight: **“Therefore Jesus said again, ‘I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep’**” (John 10:7). Maybe, in our highly industrialized, computerized world today those words don’t register the way they would have in Jesus’ day, but the meaning is still applicable and essential to our understanding of who God is and what He wants to do for us today. The Scripture verses we will be studying these next two weeks highlight one of the most beautiful topics of the Bible that we as His followers need to understand – we are the sheep of His pasture and He is our Shepherd. It’s a simple picture, but it speaks volumes of God’s devotion toward His people.

In the Scriptures the gateway (doorway) to the city was vitally important to the safety and security and overall life of a city. If there were any weak points or openings in a city’s wall they would become vulnerable to enemy attack. The gate of the city was where much of the life of the city took place: It is where the marketplace was held; gates was often named after the item that was sold there (i.e. “the Sheep Gate” (Nehemiah 3:1); “the Fish Gate” (Nehemiah 3:3)); people met at the gate of the city to hear important announcements (reference 2 Chronicles 32:6) and to hear the reading of the Law (reference Nehemiah 8:1, 3); the elders met there to transact legal business (reference Ruth 4:1-2); and it was also the seat of the king (reference 1 Kings 22:10). The gates of the city were closed at night and then opened in the morning (reference Joshua 2:5, 7). For Jesus to identify Himself as the “Gate for the sheep” He, in essence, is saying that He has possession of the whole city; He is the center of life for the city and He will supply our every need. As our gate He becomes more than our Protector, He is also our Provider, our Defender, our Teacher, our Savior, our King! And as the gate, He is the only way to enter in to that glorious and secure life!

A shepherd would become a literal “door” to the sheep pen. He would lay his body across the opening of the sheep pen, after the sheep were brought in for the night, and his body would be used to keep them safe and protected from any enemy who might try to get in and harm or steal them. As our door, Jesus provides us a way out of the darkness of the world, and into the safety and security of His flock. He is the door to salvation. No one gets in except through Him. It is no wonder that the angel of the Lord first appeared to shepherds out in the field who were **“keeping watch over their flocks by night”** (Luke 2:8-11). Who better to receive and understand the glorious announcement that the Savior of the world had been born, than those whose very profession was to guide, protect and save helpless sheep. Jesus stepped down from heaven in human flesh to lay down His body to save us from a world that wants to harm and destroy us; we are just helpless, wandering sheep in need of a Shepherd-Savior. Jesus doesn’t just possess the city, He possesses the entire Kingdom, and as our Shepherd-King He has opened the door for us to enter in to a life of safety, peace, security, and salvation if we will simply come to Him. Praise God, with Jesus as our Gate, we have found salvation and eternal security in Him!

Thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ that we are secure in Him; He watches over us continuously. Take time to thank Him for the many ways He provides for you at the gate including the peaceful, restful sleep you had last night because His watchful eye was ever upon you (reference Psalm 121:3-4). Praise Him for the day ahead equipped with the knowledge that He is your protector and will faithfully provide for you. Don't stray too far from the flock; stay close to your Shepherd today!

***“But let all who take refuge in You be glad;
let them ever sing for joy.
Spread Your protection over them,
that those who love Your name may rejoice in You.
For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous;
You surround them with Your favor as with a shield.”
(Psalm 5:11-12)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 7:13-14 & Luke 13:22-30

Jesus provides safety and security to those who are willing to enter in through His gate; but we must be willing to leave the old life behind us to enter into the new life He has for us on the other side of that door. ***“Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it”*** (Matthew 7:13-14).

The door to salvation came at a high price and to walk through that door will cost us something. There are only two paths to walk in this world: the path to heaven (which leads to eternal life), and the path to hell (which leads to eternal destruction). Jesus said the gate that leads to destruction is wide and broad and many people enter it. It is the easy, popular way that the world walks. It may seem to cost nothing in this life to walk that path, but in the end it will rob a person of the greatest treasure – life with Christ. In contrast, the door to life is narrow, and to enter it will be costly, it can be a hard path to walk, and to get there will seem lonely. ***“Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to”*** (Luke 13:24).

When we enter the door to salvation we enter a very holy place. Jesus shed His blood on the cross to gain us entrance. Our sins stood in the way of our ability to enter that narrow door, but Jesus paid the price of our admission. As our Shepherd He laid down His life for us and carried the full weight of our sin to the cross and crucified it there. We must lay the baggage of our sin at His door if we desire to enter the door into this Most Holy Place; we cannot carry it with us. This is what makes the path of life so difficult for many to enter; too many people want the blessings of the abundant life that Christ offers, but are unwilling to surrender their worldly appetites to walk that narrow path. Many people are being taught a “comfortable” Christianity that requires little or no sacrifice. They live with one foot in the church and one foot in the world – but they are two opposing roads and it impossible to walk them both at the same time. ***“Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, ‘Sir, open the door for us.’ But He will answer, ‘I don’t know you or where you come from.’”***

Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught on our streets.' But He will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me you evildoers' (Luke 13:25-27).

Many people today are not experiencing the victoriously full, abundant, and abiding life in Christ that He holds out to them, because they have not fully embraced Jesus and His work on the cross. They may have "trusted" Jesus, but they aren't truly following Him. They have been fooled into believing they are living for the Lord, when they are really living for the world. They never left their former life, yet continue in their sinful, selfish lifestyles all the while believing they are safe. Standing at the doorway, but never having truly entered in. Unfortunately, the day they realize that they are living a lie, will be the day that it is too late. ***"But while they were on their way to buy oil, the Bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with Him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said, 'Open the door for us!' But He replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you don't know the day or the hour"*** (Matthew 25:10-13).

Jesus has given us the Spirit of understanding so we will be wise and walk the narrow road without "the baggage of sin and worldliness" weighing us down. We must be willing to surrender our former life to walk with Him. We cannot expect that we can live like the world and be acceptable to Him. ***"Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you – even Jesus"*** (Acts 3:19-20). Repentance is a complete attitude change about sin – it is a total change of mind that turns our hearts to Christ and lead to a transformed life. It is a radical change of life only possible when we fully and completely trust in Christ. ***"Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death"*** (2 Corinthians 7:10). Has your life in Christ cost you anything? Has your life truly been transformed? Have you experienced victory in Christ or are you still trapped in your sinful lifestyle? Are you living for Christ or for worldly pleasure? Are you hungering and thirsting for righteousness or do you still war with your fleshly appetite? Are you keeping your oil lamp full and holding out the word of life to others who need Jesus while you wait for your Bridegroom, or are you busy fraternizing with the world and following their lead? These are just a few questions we all might ask ourselves to confirm if we are truly walking the narrow way. Confirm it in your heart today and pray for others who you know and love who also need to walk this narrow way.

***"Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the LORD our Maker;
for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture,
the flock under His care.
Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts..."***
(Psalm 95:6-8a)

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 118

One of the great examples in the Bible of the security that walls and doors provided a city is found in the book of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was overcome with distress when he received word that the walls and gates of Jerusalem had been torn down. ***“The wall of Jerusalem is broken down, and its gates have been burned with fire. When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven”*** (Nehemiah 1:3b-4). Nehemiah offered a prayer of repentance and confession to God that he and his people had sinned against God and pleaded with God to once again provide His security to His people. Nehemiah knew it was essential that the walls and gates of Jerusalem be restored; he turned to the One who is their true security and strength to gain wisdom for the task of rebuilding that lay ahead.

The rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem took only fifty-two days to complete. When the work was finished all the people gathered at the city gate to read the Book of the Law. ***“...all the people assembled as on man in the square at the Water Gate. They told Ezra the scribe to bring out the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded for Israel...he read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law”*** (Nehemiah 8:1, 3). Could we even begin to fathom, in our world of comfort and convenience, that many believers would be willing to stand for hours on end to listen to the Word of God as they did that day when they celebrated the restored wall of Jerusalem? The people of Nehemiah’s day recognized the work the Lord had done on their behalf and they were willing to sacrifice their comfort to hear the Word of the Lord and to worship God. May we be willing to offer even a sacrifice of our time to read the Word of God that we have been so blessed own a copy of.

Our Psalm this evening is linked to the dedication of the walls of Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a hymn of thanksgiving for the work the Lord has done in protecting them from their enemies and surrounding them as a wall and giving them victory. Let us offer up our own prayer of gratitude and praise for the peace and security we have of knowing that we have indeed entered through the Gate of our victorious Shepherd-King!

***“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
His love endures forever.
In my anguish I cried to the LORD,
and He answered by setting me free.
The LORD is my strength and song;
He has become my salvation.
I will not die but live,
and will proclaim what the LORD has done.
Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.
This is the gate of the LORD
through which the righteous may enter.
I will give thanks, for You answered me;
You have become my salvation.”
(Psalm 118:1, 5, 14, 17, 19-21)***

*Heavenly Father,
"This is the day that the LORD has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.
The LORD is God,
and He has made His light shine upon us.
You are my God, and I will give You thanks;
you are my God, and I will exalt You.
Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
His love endures forever."
(Psalm 118:24, 27a, 28-29)
How can I begin to express my gratitude
that You opened the way for me to
enter into this victorious and eternal life with You.
I am utterly and completely dependent upon You.
May I never leave the safety and security of Your Presence.
Help me to abide in You, rest in You,
stay close to You and learn from You
each and every day as I walk along this
path of life and follow the narrow way.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Day 16:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:2-6,8

Every day we walk through doorways and don't really give a second thought for the door other than to remember to lock it. Doorways frame the entrances and exits of our life: Home, school, work, automobiles, restaurants, hospitals, post offices, churches, court rooms, theatres, arenas, grocery stores, shopping malls, the list goes on. Every day we spend our time entering and exiting the places that provide the framework of our lives. Every door opens the way to new, or familiar, challenges, problems, fears, anxieties, opportunities, grief, trials, questions, joys, and victories. Most days we enter and exit the doorways of life purely out of routine. There is One Doorway, however, that we are invited to enter which will completely change the way we live – that door is Jesus Christ – and He is the only way to salvation and eternal life.

*"Salvation is found in no one else,
for there is no other name under heaven given to men
by which we must be saved."
(Acts 4:12)*

The day we walked through the "door of salvation" we entered into an extraordinary and abundant life; a life impossible to find walking through any earthly doorway. Jesus opened the door to a

whole new life. A life free from the bondage of sin and given a guarantee of eternal life with God in heaven. A life of protection – free from the fears of evil, resting safe and secure in Him. A life of provision – free from the worries of this life and given a promise that our needs will be met. A life in His presence – free from feelings of loneliness and given the full assurance that we are His. A life of peace – free from bearing the weight of our circumstance and given a heart of understanding. A life of power – free to live as victors instead of victims, and filled with His Holy Spirit. One doorway completely transformed our lives for the better. Why, then, would anyone, when given such an extraordinary offer, refuse to enter in?

Jesus explains to us that there are some who have positioned themselves as obstacles in the path of the sheep coming into His fold. They were “false shepherds” who were not truly concerned with the best interests of the sheep; they were only concerned with their own interests. False shepherds don’t lead sheep; they steal them. **“All who ever came before Me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them”** (John 10:8). Jesus was referring to the religious rulers who exploited their position to steal from helpless people. **“They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished severely”** (Mark 12:40); and who turned His temple into a den of thieves: **“It is written... ‘My house will be called a house of prayer’; but you have made it a ‘den of robbers’”** (Luke 19:46).

In the Scriptures, kings and officials in government were referred to as “shepherds” (reference Ezekiel 34:2). The leaders of the nation were responsible to protect and see that the needs of the people were met. But, according to Ezekiel, in his day, the leaders were focused on what served their own best interests. Instead of serving the people, they abused their position of power and influence to exploit the people and run the nation into ruin. There is an overwhelming similarity to the way our nation is being run today. Unfortunately, we live in a time that is not much unlike the time of the Judges, when everyone seems to be doing what seems right in their own mind (reference Judges 21:25). Instead of trusting in God and depending upon Him, as the godly leaders who originally helped birth and build this great nation of ours did, our nation has rebelled against God and rejected His Word (removing it from our schools!) and have put our trust in man. Like the nation of Israel we are suffering the consequences of our rebellion. And like the nation of Israel we desperately need God’s hand of mercy to get us out of the mess we’ve made for ourselves. Sheep seem to be good at doing that!

**“Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel;
prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign LORD says:
Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves!
Should not shepherds take care of the flock?
You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or
bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays
or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally.
So they were scattered because there was no shepherd,
and when they were scattered they became food
for all the wild animals.”
(Ezekiel 34:2, 4-5)**

God condemned the false shepherds and promised to provide the True Shepherd, the Messiah, to care for the sheep (Ezekiel 34:23). **“...and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this”** (Isaiah 9:6-7). Jesus is our true Shepherd. A true shepherd is willing to sacrifice for His sheep. Everything that Jesus has ever done is with our best interest, and the Kingdom, in mind. He laid down His life for the sheep. This morning let us offer a prayer of praise for the tender way our

Shepherd-King expresses His constant care and devotion to us each and every day. Let us also pray for a wave of repentance to spread across this land so the church will awaken to realize that we are responsible for the declining spiritual and moral condition of the land. May God breathe life back into this land and provide us godly shepherds to lead us back to Him!

***“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:
I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them.
As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them,
so will I look after my sheep.”
(Ezekiel 34:11-12a)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 7:15-23

How blessed we are to have a loving Shepherd who never leaves His post, but constantly watches over us at the Gate and protects us from any intruder who would seek to steal us away. We are cautioned to be on guard to any false prophet who would attempt to deceive us. ***“Watch out for the false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them” (Matthew 7:15-20).*** False prophets produce false fruit; they offer rotten fruit that cannot last. They do not edify people, they exploit them. Their interests are entirely self-focused; they promote themselves, not Jesus Christ. His kingdom is not their concern, they are interested only in building their own kingdom. We must be on guard to their deception.

***“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath?
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
The ax is already at the root of the trees,
and every tree that does not produce good fruit
will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”
(Matthew 3:7b-8, 10)***

There is a time coming, and is now upon us, ***“when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths” (2 Timothy 4:3-4).*** Ungodly men want to do what is right in their own eyes and they don’t want anyone criticizing or condemning their evil desires and pursuits.

***“Israel’s watchmen are blind, they all lack knowledge;
they are all mute dogs, they cannot bark;
they lie around and dream, they love to sleep.***

***They are dogs with mighty appetites;
they never have enough.
They are shepherds who lack understanding;
they all turn to their own way, each seeks his own gain.
'Come,' each one cries, 'let me get wine!
Let us drink our fill of beer!
And tomorrow will be like today, or even far better.'
(Isaiah 56:10-12)***

How desperately today we need shepherds, after God's own heart, who will lead the sheep with knowledge and understanding (reference Jeremiah 3:15). Our word "pastor" is derived from the Latin word "shepherd." Today we need to pray for pastor-shepherds who will take their positions as watchmen on the walls of our land. They are the spiritual watchmen of today, just as much as they were when the foundation of this nation was laid; a foundation that was built on the Word of God (reference 1 Corinthians 3:11). The position of pastor-shepherd is a high and holy calling, and they need our prayer support and encouragement to protect their personal time with the Lord so they can be strengthened and enabled by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word of God fearlessly and with conviction. The fire of revival will ignite when the church pulpit is set aflame by true shepherds who are intimately connected to Christ and devoted to the Word of God and prayer. "Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions" (Matthew 24:45-47). Let us commit to praying fervently for our pastors today and every day, and for all the pastors across the land. They are the true shepherds and true spiritual leaders of our land who have the greatest ability to influence and impact the lives of countless people for the glory of God and change the course of this nation through the Word of God one transformed life at a time!

***"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock
of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers.
Be shepherds of the church of God,
which He bought with His own blood."
(Acts 20:28)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 127

The Lord is our gate who has delivered us safely into His arm of salvation. He has not left nor forsaken us, but constantly watches over us. He also has provided us with pastor-shepherds to lead, guide, and protect us as they bring forth the truth of God's Word from the pulpit. May their

focus always be on the sheep and not on selfish pursuits. May they boldly preach the truth so the sheep will stay alert and not so easily be led astray. Let us offer a prayer of praise today for the many ways the Lord continually displays His constant and loving provision and protection our lives. May we be a help, not a hindrance to His work as He calls us to arise to the task of rebuilding the spiritual wall around this land so many will have an opportunity to enter into the door of His salvation!

*"Unless the LORD builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.
Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchmen stand guard in vain."
(Psalm 127:1)*

*Heavenly Father,
"Rescue me, O LORD, from evil men;
protect me from men of violence,
who devise evil plans in their hearts
and stir up war every day.
They make their tongues as sharp as a serpent's;
the poison of vipers is on their lips."
(Psalm 140:1)
Help me to stay close to Your truth;
may Your Word never depart from my lips.
Help me to stay alert and not be
drawn away by the deceptive lies
of ungodly men who only serve their
own self-interests and who have no interest in Your truth.
Give us shepherds after Your own heart, God;
shepherds who will lead us with knowledge and understanding
so we will stand strong and firm in this evil age,
thoroughly equipped with Your truth.
Prepare Your watchmen as they take up
their positions on the wall of this land.
Give them strength for the task and boldness in battle
as we rebuild a wall of prayer around this land.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Day 17:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:9, 10b

When we exit through the door of the world, and of our former life, and choose to enter the door of Salvation through the body of Jesus Christ we receive, not only, the glorious gift of salvation and the promise of eternal life, but also His constant and abiding presence, resurrection power, and abundant provision to live out a full and fruitful earthly life. ***“I am the gate; whoever enters through Me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture”*** (John 10:9).

Through His sacrificial and atoning death on the cross, Jesus Christ set sinful man free from the bondage of sin and its liability of death, and bestowed on us “everlasting happiness.” Jesus welcomed us through the gate of salvation and then set us free to enjoy the fullness and abundance of His rich pastures. His goodness knows no end. We are eternally blessed beyond anything we could ever hope or imagine. ***“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love Him”*** (1 Corinthians 2:9).

In Christ we have the promise of both eternal security and present safety and subsidy. What comfort and assurance that should bring to all His children as we live in this present age of evil opposition and uncertainty. ***“No longer will violence be heard in your land, or ruins or destruction within your borders, but you will call your walls Salvation and your gates Praise”*** (Isaiah 60:18). When we entered His gate, through the body of our “Yeshuwah” (“salvation”), we entered into a life of victory and freedom. He is our defense, our security, our peace, and our provision; with Him we need not be afraid, or be in want of any need. With Him we can rest assured that we will never find greener pastures anywhere else or ever worry about His well running dry. He has led us to an abundant and fruitful land where His living water continuously flows. All we need to do is drink deeply from His supply and we will never be in want of anything.

***“Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.
The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song;
He has become my salvation.
With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.”
(Isaiah 12:2)***

This morning let us offer up a song of praise to our wondrous Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the priceless gift of salvation He given us. ***“Surely this is our God; we trusted in Him, and He saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in Him; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation”*** (Isaiah 25:9). May we also offer up a prayer of confession for those times we have failed to trust Him to be the total source of our provision and have been tempted away by “greener” pastures that were nothing but artificial turf. Today, let us bask in the knowledge and truth that we have walked through the only gate that can deliver us out of the bondage of sin and into a life of freedom and abundance; may we feast daily in His fruitful land and pray that others would not delay but choose to follow the narrow path that leads them in. ***“I will listen to what God the LORD will say; He promises peace to His people, His saints – but let them not return to folly. Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that His glory may dwell in our land”*** (Psalm 85:8).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 13:44-46

Our Heavenly Father offered us His greatest treasure in the person of His One and Only beloved Son, Jesus Christ. His purpose was to show us our worth to Him, as His crowning glory of all creation (reference Genesis 1:26a). The door that was previously closed on His people to keep them out of the garden and unable to eat from the Tree of Life (reference Genesis 3:24), would now be opened through the sacrifice of His Son to open the way to heaven and provide eternal life. ***“But I when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself”*** (John 12:32).

Jesus is the *only* doorway back into that abundant and fruitful garden where we dwell in His presence and eat from the tree of life (reference Revelation 22:1-2). ***“To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life which is in the paradise of God”*** (Revelation 2:7). His kingdom is of the greatest value and we, His Church, are His greatest worth, whom He bought through the great trial and suffering. The gates of heaven, themselves, are made from a single pearl (reference Revelation 21:21) (a gem whose beauty, although it cannot be carved or cut, God purposed to be birthed through pain and suffering); revealing to all who enter the matchless price that was paid for admission into His Kingdom, and the path the saints would have to walk if they chose to enter in.

While we could never purchase our own salvation we should be so humbled by the priceless gift we have been given that we, ourselves, should be willing to give up all our earthly possessions and want to lay down our own lives to lay hold of this extraordinary treasure. ***“When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it”*** (Mathew 13:46). We, however, do not have the means or the power to achieve such a thing, and that is why God Himself gave up His heavenly throne and His royal robes and laid down His very life to go after that which He saw as His greatest treasure – us! Beloved, do you see how valuable you are to Him! All the pain, suffering and trials of this life that you are going through are not without purpose, they are what His using to transform you into His precious pearl which Jesus Himself picked up from the waters depths with His own nail-scarred hands. May we, like Jonah, who himself faced the watery depths, declare in the midst of our trials: ***“Salvation comes from the LORD”*** (Jonah 2:9b)

This afternoon, rest securely in His tender embrace, filled with the knowledge that you have been bought with a price; you are His! Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (reference Romans 8:35-39)! Today, put on your helmet of salvation and remember the price He paid to deliver you from your sin (reference Ephesians 6:17). ***“Put on the hope of salvation as a helmet”*** (1 Thessalonians 5:8). Do not allow the discouraging, doubtful, despairing voices of the past seep back in. Stand firm in your salvation, you have been delivered from the shackles of your sin and have been set free to feast in the rich pastures of God’s redeeming grace. Feast on the bounty of His goodness and grace today and fill your mind with His truth; walk in this world knowing with assurance that He has rescued you! Praise Him for His salvation that has set you free from your sins, and for the daily deliverance He gives you as you walk through the trials of this life with Him!

***“He will be a sure foundation for your times,
a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge;
the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.”
(Isaiah 33:6)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 65

Throughout the Scriptures (and throughout history), the Lord’s miraculous and mighty saving acts on behalf of His people were meant to bring Him recognition and acknowledgement by all people. This was vividly displayed in the Exodus in the deliverance of His people Israel; and was dynamically demonstrated in His birth, life, crucifixion, and resurrection as His supreme saving act on behalf of all mankind; and will come to a dramatic conclusion with His imminent return. From creation to redemption God’s mighty saving and sustaining power has been demonstrated towards mankind. He has proven, time and time again, and without fail, that He is the only God who delivers and saves and abundantly supplies for the needs of His beloved creation. One day all people and nations will see and know, and ultimately acknowledge Him as Lord (reference Philippians 2:10-11). ***“ ‘As surely as I live,’ says the Lord, ‘every knee will bow before Me; every tongue will confess to God’ ”*** (Romans 14:11).

This evening, let us offer a prayer of praise to the Lord for drawing us to Himself and for giving us eyes to see and know that He is Lord. Praise Him also for the continual demonstration of His amazing love and grace in our lives as He never stops showering us with His goodness. Confess your desire to have the same attitude as Christ, living a life of humility and love so that all who come in contact with you would know without a doubt that you have a personal relationship with the only God who hears and acts on behalf of His people, who offers salvation and is the supplier of every human need. ***“Sing to the LORD, praise His name; proclaim His salvation day after day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous deeds among the people”*** (Psalm 96:2-3).

***“Praise awaits you, O God, in Zion;
to You our vows will be fulfilled.
O You who hear prayer, to You all men will come.
When we were overwhelmed by sins,
You forgave our transgressions.
Blessed are those You choose and bring near to live in Your courts!
We are filled with the good things of Your house,
of Your holy temple.
You crown the year with Your bounty,
and Your carts overflow with abundance.”
(Psalm 65:1-4, 11)***

**Heavenly Father,
“I trust in Your unfailing love;**

my heart rejoices in Your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
for He has been good to me.”
(Psalm 13:5-6)
“My soul will rejoice in the LORD and delight in His salvation.
My whole being will exclaim, ‘Who is like You, O LORD?
You rescue the poor from those too strong for them,
the poor and needy from those who rob them.”
(Psalm 35:9-10)
“You, O God, are my king from of old;
You bring salvation upon the earth.”
(Psalm 74:12)
“Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.”
(Revelation 7:10)
“...to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God,
be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.”
(1 Timothy 1:17)
In the Mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Day 18:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:1, 10

Jesus opened the doorway for His sheep to enter into a life of sweet fellowship with Him. He is the only gate that leads to an abundant, fruitful and eternal life; free from the bondage of sin and its deadly consequences. In Him we have freedom; freedom to experience all the joys and spiritual blessings of His kingdom if we will learn to abide in Him. Our shackles to this world have been removed so we can now be bound to Him. It is this relationship that should take precedence above all else as now our goal is to be *with*, and to be *like*, Him. Nothing else matters, and little else is required, except to maintain and grow this vital connection to the Lord.

From the moment we walked through that door by faith and entered into fellowship with God, we made ourselves enemies with the world. **“...don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God”** (James 4:4). We have found a rare and priceless treasure in the friendship of God and there is a thief who will stop at nothing to steal it from us. **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy...”** (John 10:10a). As we walk the path of faith we will be confronted by the enemies of God who want to rob us of the power and peace we have found in Him. They are not jealous for that relationship, desiring it for themselves; No! their goal is to drag us back into the darkness, trapped again in the shackles of sin; left alone and powerless. Behind them is the prince of the world, Satan, leading the charge to steal from God the very thing He desires the most from His sheep – a deep abiding union and fellowship with them. All of the devil’s efforts

are aimed at destroying our connection to God, because he wants to hurt the heart of God. The devil wants to rob us of our faith, kill our relationship with the Lord, and destroy any chance for future generations to experience salvation through Jesus Christ. ***“But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face”*** (Job 1:11).

Do we now see why protecting and nurturing our love relationship with the Lord is so vitally important? We have been given the greatest treasure under heaven in our relationship with Jesus Christ; a connection that cost Him His very life. He gave up everything that we might have everything. And we should want to protect this extraordinary and priceless gift. We must not take for granted what a treasure we have been given, nor walk in this world without our guard up to protect it! The Lord has made it clear in His Word who our enemy is: ***“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the power of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms”*** (Ephesians 6:12); and how we are to defeat him: ***“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand”*** (v.13).

The battle we are facing is against an enemy who wants us to join him in opposing God’s work in this world; he knows when God’s work is finished, he is finished too! Satan is a murderer, a liar, and a deceiver who sneaks around like a serpent, and prowls around like a lion (reference 1 Peter 5:8). His goal is to devour us and destroy the work of God; and many of God’s children are not aware that we are actually contributing to his work. Our battle is not against people, our battle is against the devil. We are in a spiritual battle and cannot rely on human weapons. God has given us everything we need to stand against the enemy. ***“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ”*** (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Every time we waste a breath on human arguments that bring division and discord to the church of God we join forces with the enemy and allow him to use us to disrupt the work of God’s kingdom. Every time we allow ourselves to be lured away by the enticements of the world and willingly indulge in carnal pleasures that feed only our flesh we have fallen for the same line that Eve did in the garden and have rejected the abundant pastures of the Lord; we offend God with our sin and weaken our effectiveness for the kingdom by hindering our ability to pray and blocking God’s ability to hear our prayers. Every moment we spend striving for worldly wealth, prosperity and prestige we are wasting precious time building our own kingdom instead of God’s. And every moment we spend on any other pursuit other than nurturing our relationship with God we have fallen for one of the devil’s greatest weapons of mass destruction – distraction. If he can get us focused and busy on anything other than God, keeping us away from the Source of our strength and power, he has us right where he wants us and we are now able to serve his purposes instead of God’s!

Everyday we step out into the world we are on a battleground and we must take time (before we even get out of bed) to put on our “spiritual” armor, ***“with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left”*** (2 Corinthians 6:7b); so we will be adequately prepared and equipped to face whatever (or whoever) the enemy has waiting for us. We must remind ourselves, also, that the Lord has given us the greatest weapon of warfare against the enemy – our faith! Jesus Christ went to the cross and by His death and resurrection overcame our enemy’s: the world, Satan, sin, and death! Through Christ we already have the victory! ***“But thanks be to God! He has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 15:57). Therefore, let us ***“clothe [our]selves with the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (Romans 13:14) remembering, with each article of the spiritual armor we put on and take up, that He is our “truth”, our “righteousness”, our “peace”, our “faith”, our “salvation” and our “sword” the Word of God (Ephesians 6:14-17). ***“He has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of righteousness”*** (Isaiah 61:10a).

Make sure you are dressed adequately today and put these Scriptures in your spiritual arsenal so you are ready to face the battle with confidence today, knowing that you are a victor in Christ; no one can steal you away from your intimate relationship with the Lord, unless you let them:

***“In this world you will have trouble.
But take heart! I have overcome the world”***
(John 16:33)

“...the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”
(1 John 4:4b)

“If God is for us, who can be against us?”
(Romans 8:31b)

***“No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.
For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,
neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth,
nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God
that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***
(Romans 8:37-39)

“Don’t be afraid...those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”
(2 Kings 6:16)

***“Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged...
for there is a greater power with us than with him.
With him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God
to help us and to fight our battles.”***
(2 Chronicles 32:7-8a)

***“For I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body,
I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me
and gave Himself for me.”***
(Galatians 2:20).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 16:13-19

The enemy of God wants to rob us of our faith. Everything else that Satan tries to steal from our life – our marriage, our children, our security, our future – is just icing on the cake. Satan is after the creamy center filling – our personal relationship with, and our faith in, God. The devil wants to rob from God all of the devotion that the Lord desires from His children and stop the work of God’s kingdom from progressing. Jesus even questioned that when He returns, ***“will He find***

faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8b). The declining spiritual and moral condition of our world speaks to the need for perseverance on behalf of the saints of God.

***"This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith.
"Who is it that overcomes the world?
Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."
(1 John 5:4, 5)***

When Jesus questioned His disciples about their faith, He asked them: ***"But what about you? Who do you say that I am?"*** (Matthew 16:15). Peter's bold declaration that day would provide the foundation on which God would build His church: ***"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"*** (v.16). This is the question the Lord proposes to everyone today, ***"Who do you say that I am?"*** Our response to Him is vital to our relationship with Him. Our right confession of Christ is the basis of our Christianity: ***"...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved"*** (Romans 10:9-10). Once we make this confession we enter through the gate of salvation and experience the abundant life that the Lord has waiting for us and can feed on His green pastures of deeper truth and understanding. This confession becomes a solid cornerstone with which the Lord uses to build within us an immovable mountain of faith. ***"...and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it"*** (Matthew 16:18). When we stand firm on the rock of Christ we have no reason to fear the enemy of God (reference Isaiah 26:3-4).

The Lord gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven that he might proclaim Christ to the captives and set them free to walk in newness of life with Jesus Christ. ***"...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"*** (v.19b). Peter and the disciples would open the door of faith to the Jews and the Gentiles, and with Christ as the Chief Architect and Builder, a new body would be formed out of those who would believe, with Christ as the Head (reference Ephesians 1:22-23). ***"His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility"*** (Ephesians 2:15b, 16). It is no wonder the forces of the spiritual realm are aligned in hostility against God's holy building program. The extent to which the church is united on this earth declares to the heavenlies His wisdom: ***"His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to His eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** (Ephesians 3:10-11). Why then would we do anything to tear down or hinder this magnificent work of God?

Jesus Christ is the Rock on which our faith is built and through Him we have become "living" stones (1 Peter 2:5), filled with His Holy Spirit, to offer our lives as a "living sacrifice" to Him for His holy purpose (reference Romans 12:2). Let us, like the brave shepherd boy, David, pick up the solid rock stone of our faith, Jesus Christ, and slay the Goliaths of our life who dare profane the precious name of our Lord by accusing, ridiculing, criticizing, or condemning us in an effort to cause us to run in fear or reject the One who opened the door to a life of freedom and fellowship with Him! ***"...He gave me a firm place to stand. He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD"*** (Psalm 40:2b, 3). Confess your faith and fears to Him today and stand firm on the One who is your Rock!

***"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;
my hope comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
He is my fortress, I will not be shaken.
My salvation and my honor depend on God;***

***He is my mighty rock, my refuge.
Trust in Him at all times, O people;
pour out your hearts to Him,
for God is our refuge.”
(Psalm 62:5-8)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 84

Beloved saint, as we come to a time of worship and praise this evening may our heart and flesh cry out for the living God, as the psalmists’ did. ***“As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?”*** (Psalm 42:1-2). This should be the battle cry of every believer. We need spiritual appetites such as this; hearts that “hunger and thirst” for deeper fellowship with the Lord. Much of the church is spiritually malnourished and therefore too weak and ill-equipped to face the battles of evil that are waging all around us. We need to whet our appetites with the Word of God and fix our eyes on the author and perfecter of our faith, Christ Jesus, and be willing to slay everything in our path that would dare disrupt or rob us of our intimate union and fellowship with our Lord. Jesus, Himself, let nothing deter Him from maintaining His love relationship with the Father; and neither should we.

May we see every battle before us through spiritual eyes recognizing that the foe we are up against wants to harm and hurt the very heart of the great Love of our life. May we rise up and defend our First Love with wholehearted devotion, clothed in our spiritual armor, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ! We are pilgrims just passing through and heading home. Our desire should be for things above and not for the things of this earth. We have been given the keys to unlock the door of faith for others to experience sweet fellowship with Christ; everything we do and say should lead others to the doorway of the kingdom of heaven and not be a stumbling block that would hinder them from coming in. May we give ourselves wholly to Christ so we can become a holy vessel for Christ. May our days, and nights, be filled with worship of Him! Click [here](#) to listen to “In Christ Alone” by Owl City as you worship.

***“How lovely is Your dwelling place, O LORD Almighty!
My soul yearns, even faints,
for the courts of the LORD;
my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.
Blessed are those who dwell in Your house;
they are ever praising You.
Blessed are those whose strength is in You,
who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.
Better is one day in Your courts
than a thousand elsewhere;***

*I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God
than to dwell in the tents of the wicked.
For the LORD God is a sun and shield;
the LORD bestows favor and honor;
no good thing does He withhold
from those whose walk is blameless.
O LORD Almighty, blessed is the man who trusts in You.”
(Psalm 84:1-2, 4-5, 7, 10-12)*

Heavenly Father,
“I will proclaim the name of the LORD.
Oh, praise the greatness of our God!
He is the Rock, His works are perfect,
and all His ways are just.
A faithful God who does no wrong,
upright and just is He.”
(Deuteronomy 32:3-4)
“The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge,
my shield and the horn of my salvation.
He is my stronghold, my refuge and my savior.
I call to the LORD, who is worthy of praise
and I am saved from my enemies.”
(2 Samuel 22:2-3)
“Hear my prayer, O LORD God Almighty;
listen to me, O God of Jacob.
Look upon our shield, O God;
look with favor on Your anointed one.”
(Psalm 84:8-9)
“My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
He is my fortress, I will never be shaken.”
(Psalm 62:1-2)
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Day 19:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

*“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious
Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty,*

power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read Revelation 3:14-22

We ended our day yesterday with a reading from Psalm 84 in which the Psalmist declared, **“I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked”** (v.10b). How much pleasure we would bring the Lord if this too would become the desire of our hearts; that we would be willing to forsake the company of all others for the privilege of enjoying sweet fellowship with God. How wondrous it would be if we all shared that special bond which “the disciple whom Jesus loved” enjoyed with the Lord (reference John 13:23; 21:20). There is nothing in this world, nor any person in our lives, who can offer us the security and peace that we find in an intimate abiding relationship with the Lord. May we rest our weary head on His shoulder and tarry a moment longer before we run head first into the busyness of the day. **“Let the beloved of the LORD rest secure in Him, for He shields him all day long, and the one the LORD loves rests between His shoulders”** (Deuteronomy 33:12).

Jesus opened the door for us to enjoy a life of freedom and fellowship with Him. He wants nothing more than to sit with us at His table and nourish us from His Word; enjoying a few precious moments of conversation with us. He relishes this communion with us far more than we do. Unfortunately, over time, many of His children have forgotten the joy of His sweet fellowship and have found themselves too busy to stop long enough for a meal, let alone taking the time to grab a quick morsel on their way out the door while uttering a quick promise that someday they will find the time for more. Sadly, our once invited and welcomed invisible Guest at every meal is merely a stranger left on the other side of the door waiting and wondering when we will slow down long enough to hear His knock at the door.

***“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.
If anyone hears My voice and opens the door,
I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.”
(Revelation 3:20)***

Jesus Christ laid down His life for the sheep to become our doorway to an abundant and fruitful life; and He stands at the doorway watching over us appealing to us to not wander away and miss out on the peace and power that comes from abiding in Him. The church of Laodicea is not unlike many of the churches today; operating in the name of Christ, but having left their CEO at the door. We have neglected the necessary matters of the ministry of the Word of God and prayer, only to cater to the complaints and comforts of those interest in building their own kingdom instead of God's. We have built successful churches following the business model of the world, but lacking in spiritual power in the eyes of God. **“You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked”** (Revelation 3:17).

It's been said that **“a church without prayer, is a church without God.”** The prayer altar is barely smoldering in many of our modern day churches, and the result of our independence from God is a powerless, ineffective Body, that, like Laodicea, is neither a channel of “healing for the spiritually sick nor refreshment for the spiritually weary” (NIV). It's time to repent and accept the discipline of our loving Shepherd who wants to stoke the fire of our hearts and set us aflame in passionate pursuit of our First Love, once again. **“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline”** (v.19a). May we **“who [have] an ear, let [us] hear what the Spirit [is saying] to the church[es]”** (v.22), and open the door to experience the fullness of His Presence and His Power that we are missing and so desperately need once again!

***“Be dressed and ready for service and keep your lamps burning,
like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet,
so that when he comes and knocks they can***

***immediately open the door for him.”
(Luke 12:35-36)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 7:7-9

The Lord’s desire for us to experience fellowship and communion with Him is so great that He waits patiently at the door, persistently knocking, at least for the time being, until we finally answer and open the door to Him. Sometimes, however, the only way to get our attention is through times of trial and tribulation. It is often, only, when everything is out of our control, that we turn our attention to the One who has everything under control. It is in this place of utter dependence upon God that we finally realize the power of prayer. In the Book of Acts, we find the faithful followers of the Lord gathering in fervent prayer for the release of Peter from prison (reference Acts 12:12). When their answer finally came they didn’t have the faith to answer the knock at the door. ***“But Peter kept on knocking, and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished”*** (Acts 12:16). They had enough faith to pray believing that God *could* answer their prayers, but not enough faith to accept the answer when it finally came. ***“I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours”*** (Mark 11:24b). When we come to God in prayer, we must believe and not doubt (reference James 1:6), being ever mindful that we are making our request from the very One who already knows our every need and is already working on our behalf. We must put our faith in the One we are praying to, and not in faith itself. ***“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him”*** (1 John 5:14-15).

Every day our Answer is waiting for us at the door in the person of Jesus Christ. Our faithful, loving Shepherd and Savior stands holding the key to our every question, concern, difficulty, trial, challenge and circumstance which we face. His purpose in even allowing us to suffer any pain is to lead us to Him in the first place. The Lord wants us to enjoy fellowship and communion with Him and therefore calls us to remain in continuous and fervent prayer so we can experience the peace and confidence of knowing He has everything under control and resting securely in the palm of His Sovereign hand.

***“Ask and it will be given to you;
seek and you will find;
knock and the door will be opened to you.
For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds;
and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”
(Matthew 7:7-8)***

The Lord has given us His Holy Spirit to lead us through the door of heavenly understanding. It is through the discipline of persistent prayer, in which we keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking, that we find the spiritual discernment and understanding we need. ***“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him”*** (James 1:5). The Lord is the one who initiates the knocking so we

will recognize our need for Him. In everything He has been the One to answer our every need before we ever thought to ask (reference Romans 5:8). When He appeared to King Solomon in a dream, he knocked on the door and gave the young king the opportunity to ask Him for anything; Solomon was confronted with the reality that he would need the wisdom of God to judge the people effectively; it pleased God that he responded to His knocking, and because Solomon sought Godly wisdom above all else, the Lord did not fail to meet His every other need; and He did so abundantly (reference 1 Kings 3:5, 9-13).

Every day our loving Lord stands at the door and knocks waiting for us to recognize our need to come to Him and lay our requests at His feet. He already knows our every need and especially knows that our greatest need is for Him. The answer is already waiting for us – all we have to do is let Him in! Open the door and welcome Him in and enjoy the greatest dining experience of your life – realizing that at each and every meal you are feasting at the table of the king. Today, if you are fumbling for words and just don't know what to say, simply sit beside Him and listen to what He has to say. He showed up at your door because He has something He wants to share with you, and He knew already that you would let Him in. Take time to write down what He is speaking to your heart and be willing to dig for deeper understanding as you open up the Word of truth and continue in prayer with Him.

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 9

The Lord desires that we lay hold of Him and remain in prayer until the answer comes. The answers we are waiting for will be completely fulfilled with the return of our awaited King! ***“Even so, when you see all these things, you know that He is near, right at the door”*** (Matthew 24:33). Jesus holds the answer that we are looking for and He is standing at the door to give it to us if we will simply let Him in and allow Him to sit with us and feed us from His Word where all wisdom, knowledge and understanding can be found. May we become diligent students of His Word and persistent pray-ers so we can open the way for others to find the Answer they too are looking for. May we become as persistent as the praying widow who gave the judge no rest until she got the answer she desired (Luke 18:1-8); and through our obedience to remain in faithful and fervent prayer may we give God the answer He is looking for: ***“...will He find faith on the earth?”*** (v.8b). Let's make sure we do our part in prayer to see He returns to find the affirmative!

We have been given everything we need to pray effectively and continuously – the promises of God's Word and the presence of the Holy Spirit to help us in our prayers, when we cannot find the words to pray (reference Romans 8:26-27). Therefore we have no excuse to miss out on this precious time of communion with our Lord each day. May we not resist His promptings, but be willing to open the door to our private prayer closet and lift up those things He lays upon our heart today. Ask Him for wisdom on how, and for whom, He would have you to pray today. ***“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need”*** (Hebrews 4:16).

“I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart;

*I will tell of all Your wonders.
I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High.
You have sat on Your throne, judging righteously.
The LORD reigns forever;
He has established His throne for judgment.
He will judge the world in righteousness;
He will govern the peoples with justice.
The LORD is a refuge for the oppressed,
a stronghold in times of trouble.
Those who know Your name will trust in You,
for You, LORD, have never forsaken those who seek You.
Have mercy and lift me up from the gates of death,
that I may declare Your praises in the gates of the
Daughter of Zion and there rejoice in Your salvation.”
(Psalm 9:1-2, 4, 7-10, 13b-14)*

*Heavenly Father,
I praise you that You came to me
and showed me my great need of You.
Thank You for showing up every day
and not giving up until I spend this time with You.
I am so grateful for the persistent way You
have taken the time to teach me to depend on You.
There is no place else I would want to be
then in the place of prayer with You.
Open my heart to hear Your heart on the matters
that are most important to You;
and show me daily in Your Word how to
pray the way You do so Your will can
be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Use me as a channel of Your grace to pray Your blessings
into the lives of those You desire to reach today.
And give me the strategies I need to do the work
You've called me to and to further
Your kingdom in the world today.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Day 20:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 5:19-30

Our faithful, loving, compassionate Shepherd-Savior has opened to us the gate to a life of peace, security, and abundance. He is ever watchful to see that we are feasting from the fertile land that He has provided (His Word!), so we will be, not only, strong and able to stand in these evil days when so much of the world tugs and tempts in an attempt to draw us away from our faith in, and devotion to, the Lord, but, also, found faithful when we stand before our Judge one day. ***“As for the person who hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge him...There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words...”*** (John 12:47a, 49a)

***“...the Father judges no one,
but has entrusted all judgment to the Son.
And He has given Him authority to judge
because He is the Son of Man.”***
(John 5:22, 27)

Jesus said, ***“I did not come to judge the world, but to save it”*** (John 12:47b). The cross is God’s judgment on the world. The Lord’s loving rebuke to the Church in Laodicea, in our reading yesterday, was issued to wake up this foolish church who had become weak and ineffective because they were relying on their own resources rather than the Word of God (reference Revelation 3:19). They left God outside the doors of the church and as a result their spiritual power had fizzled out. They had lost their spiritual perspective and were measuring the work of God by the ways of the world. The work they were doing was no longer glorifying God. In order to get their attention the Lord would allow a little affliction that would burn off the dross so this church would be purified and set aflame with passion for God’s kingdom. ***“For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God”*** (1 Peter 4:17a).

***“ ‘My Son, do not make light of the Lord’s discipline,
and do not lose heart when He rebukes you,
because the Lord disciplines those He loves,
and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son.’
Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons.
No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful.
Later on, however it produces a harvest of righteousness
and peace for those who have been trained by it.
Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees.
‘Make level paths for your feet,’ so that the lame may not
be disabled, but rather healed.”***
(Hebrews 12:5b-7a, 11-13)

The Lord allows suffering and trials in our life to refine us, purify us, and to awaken us to the suffering of those around us; in particular, lost sinners who are in desperate need of salvation. We may face the fire of affliction now, but our testimony and witness will save others from the eternal fire later. ***“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all”*** (2 Corinthians 4:17). Praise God He judges in righteousness, and has, by His mercy and grace, cleared the path and opened the gate for us to enter in to an abundant and eternal life with Him. Let us remove the obstacles out of the path of those who need Jesus – and we may be the ones blocking their view – and lift up Christ as a banner so they too can find their way to Him.

***“Pass through, pass through the gates!
Prepare the way for the people.
Build up, build up the highway!
Remove the stones.
Raise a banner for the nations.”
(Isaiah 62:10)***

Beloved, we have made it to the midpoint mark of our journey and it can seem like we still have a long way to go, but let us be encouraged that with each step we take we are drawing closer to Jesus. Keep feasting on His Word and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and press onward and upward toward the goal (reference Philippians 3:14).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read James 5:7-9

It is the Lord’s desire that the heart of His people remain on fire with a passionate desire to know Him, and to make Him known to others. The heart of the church of Laodicea had grown lukewarm and they needed to be reignited with spiritual fervor for the Lord. When the Body of Christ begins to lose its’ connection to the Head, which is Christ Jesus, the heart loses its passion and begins to grow cold. If left unchecked it will become hardened. ***“Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold”*** (Matthew 24:12a). A sign that the heart is beginning to grow cold is a growing impatience with our brothers and sisters in the Lord. We must be on guard for the subtle seeds of division that are being planted in the church, and are being cultivated because we have lost our vital connection to the Lord.

***“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming.
See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop
and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.
You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.
Don’t grumble against each other, brothers, or you will be judged.
The Judge is standing at the door!”
(James 5:7-9)***

The Lord is returning soon and His desire is to see a heart of love cultivated in His church. He has provided us the essential tools of the Word of God and prayer to help us establish and connect our heart to His. ***“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work”*** (Ephesians 4:15-16). The strength and power we need to accomplish the work of God, and ultimately impact the world for the glory of God, is only available when our heart is connected to God’s heart. It is therefore essential that we nurture our relationship with the Lord and make Him our utmost pursuit and priority. ***“Now remain in My love”*** (John 15:9b). May we draw closer to God’s heart each day as we spend this time in His Word and in prayer, and exchange our heart of stone for His heart of flesh that we might also experience the level of love that would willingly lay down His life for another (reference John 15:13). As we spend our time in

prayer, may we ask the Lord to show us His heart on all matters, and have courage to be responsive to share His heart with others.

This afternoon take time to meditate on 1 Corinthians 13 and pray for those you are finding it difficult to love. Keep in mind that Jesus came, not to condemn or to judge us, but to show us His love to us so we could be saved (reference John 3:17). This is His desire for all mankind (reference 2 Peter 3:9). Ask the Lord to remove whatever may be blocking your heart from being used as a channel for His love to flow to someone in your life He wants to reach. As you pray, be ever mindful that the Lord has chosen you to be His conduit of grace to someone He desperately wants to shower with His love; begin your time of prayer by asking Him to move you out of the way. ***“He must become greater; I must become less”*** (John 3:30).

***“May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other
and for everyone else, just as our does for you.
May He strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless
and holy in the presence of our God and Father when
our Lord Jesus comes with all His holy ones.”
(1 Thessalonians 3:12-13)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 75

The Lord has graciously poured out His love upon us when we deserved nothing but His wrath. How blessed we are to have been welcomed into His fold and allowed to feast on the abundance of His eternal kingdom. We now have the humble privilege of sharing the good news of His kingdom with others, sadly, however sometimes our heart gets in the way and we pass judgment instead of offering the grace that was poured out upon us so abundantly. ***“You judge by human standards, I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, My decisions are right, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent Me”*** (John 8:15-16). All wisdom belongs to the Lord who alone judges righteously. He will judge all at the appointed time, but for now He extends His mercy and grace. Praise Him that He extended the scepter of His gracious hand to you and saved you from the wrath to come. ***“For there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day – and not only me, but also to all who have longed for His appearing”*** (2 Timothy 4:8).

***“We give thanks to You, O God,
We give thanks, for Your Name is near;
men tell of Your wonderful deeds.
You say, ‘I choose the appointed time;
it is I who judge uprightly.
When the earth and all its people quake,
it is I who hold its pillars firm.
To the arrogant, I say, ‘Boast no more,’***

and to the wicked, 'Do not lift up your horns.
 Do not lift your horns against heaven;
 do not speak with outstretched neck.'
 No one from the east or the west
 or from the desert can exalt a man.
 But it is God who judges;
 He brings one down, He exalts another.
 In the hand of the LORD is a cup full of
 foaming wine mixed with spices;
 He pours it out, and all the wicked of the earth
 drink it down to its very dregs.
 As for me, I will declare this forever;
 I will sing praise to the God of Jacob.
 I will cut off the horns of all the wicked,
 but the horns of the righteous will be lifted up."
 (Psalm 75)

Heavenly Father,
 "Blessed by Your glorious name,
 and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise.
 You alone are the LORD.
 You made the heavens, even the highest heavens,
 and all their starry host, the earth and all that is on it,
 the seas and all that is in them.
 You give life to everything, and the
 multitudes of heaven worship You."
 (Nehemiah 9:5b-6)
 "O Lord, the great and awesome God,
 who keeps His covenant of love with all who love Him
 and obey His ☐xactly☐, we have sinned
 and done wrong. We have been wicked
 and have rebelled; we have turned away
 from Your commands and laws.
 All this disaster has come upon us,
 yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD
 our God by turning from our sins
 and giving attention to Your truth.
 The LORD did not hesitate to bring the
 disaster upon us, for the LORD our God is
☐xactly☐s in everything He does;
 yet we have not obeyed Him.
 Now, our God, hear the prayers
 and petitions of Your servant.
 For Your sake, O Lord, look with favor
 on Your desolate sanctuary.
 Give ear, O God, and hear; open Your eyes

***and see the desolation of the city that
bears Your Name. We do not make
requests of You because we are righteous,
but because of Your great mercy.
O Lord, listen! O Lord, forgive!
O Lord, hear and act! For Your sake,
O my God, do not delay,
because Your city and Your people
bear Your Name.”
(Daniel 9:4-5, 13-14, 17-19)
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.***

Day 21:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read Hebrews 11:8-10; Revelation 21

Jesus Christ is “the Gate for the sheep” and our doorway to heaven. For those who choose to believe Him and accept His gracious (and priceless) offer to enter into His kingdom through this narrow door, they will find a rich pasture with all the provision and protection necessary to live an abundant and fruitful life on this earth, but also, with the expectation and hope of a permanent home in heaven in the presence of our Shepherd-Savior. ***“In My Father’s house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you”*** (John 14:2).

***“I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem,
coming down out of heaven from God,
prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband
Now the dwelling of God is with men, and He will live with them.”
(Revelation 21:2, 3b)***

Abraham walked with the Lord through the fertile fields of faith with his eyes fixed on the future hope of his eternal home. ***“For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God”*** (Hebrews 11:10). He had lived his life as a pilgrim dwelling in earthly tents, but had placed his hope in the permanent foundations of the heavenly city that would someday be his future home. ***“For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come”*** (Hebrews 13:14). When we come to Jesus by faith we receive the assurance of salvation and are released from the shackles of sin and the fear of death that are part of this present life, but we also receive the promise of our future inheritance as His children in His heavenly kingdom. ***“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body”*** (Philippians 3:20-21).

We, like Abraham, are pilgrims just passing through on our way to the Holy City of God. Because our citizenship is in heaven we are to obey heaven’s law and do whatever is necessary to please our Heavenly Father. The Lord desires that as we walk with Him we would live in peace with men

on this present earth and seek to glorify Him by living pure and holy lives. ***“Be holy, because I am holy”*** (1 Peter 1:15b). As we meditate on the wondrous portrait of heaven provided in Revelation 21-22 may our hearts be so motivated by the prospect and promise of our eternal home that we will throw off the hindrances of this present world and dedicate these final days to worshiping God, keeping His Word, and continuing His work. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus Christ, who is the author and perfecter of our faith, and Who, by His blood, paid the price for us to enter into the eternal city, our New Jerusalem!

***“Blessed are those who wash their robes,
that they may have the right to the tree of life
and may go through the gates of the city.”
(Revelation 22:14)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Ephesians 2:19-22

As we look forward to God’s glorious Kingdom in heaven we must not lose sight that we are part of His great kingdom program on this earth. ***“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone. In Him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in Him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by His Spirit”*** (Ephesians 2:19-22).

The Lord first dwelt in the earthly tabernacle and temple as a symbol of His presence and a sign of His protection among His people as He revealed Himself to the surrounding nations. Today, He is building His church (made up of believing Jews and Gentiles), through the wisdom of His Word and as the place where His Spirit dwells (reference 1 Corinthians 3:16; corporately and individually (reference 1 Corinthians 6:19)) to display the splendor of His redemptive work on behalf of all mankind. ***“They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of His splendor”*** (Isaiah 61:3b).

***“His intent was that now, through the church,
the manifold wisdom of God should be made known.”
(Ephesians 3:10)***

The Lord led us through the Gate of salvation so we can be productive, fruitful and secure under the protective and watchful eye of our Shepherd-Savior. ***“They are the shoot I have planted, the work of My hands”*** (Isaiah 60:21). He has welcomed us into His pasture and planted us in the field so we participants in His temple (kingdom) building program. ***“For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder...for no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ”*** (1 Corinthians 3:9, 10a, 11). Paul faithfully laid the foundation by preaching Christ only and Him crucified (v. 2:2). ***“...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God***

has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God”
(v.1:23-24).

This is the banner we are called to carry today, the banner of the cross of Christ. We are simply called to declare His praises as we hold out the Word of God and boldly share His truth. ***“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest in men’s wisdom, but on God’s power”*** (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). The Holy Spirit that lives inside us will use the Word of God, that we have diligently and faithfully feasted upon, as seed to plant in the hearts of those people whom He has already cultivated and prepared to receive it (reference Hebrews 4:12). ***“So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it”*** (Isaiah 55:11). We are not responsible for how others will respond to God’s truth; we are simply responsible for storing God’s Word in our heart so we will be prepared when the Spirit prompts us to obediently share and offer another hungry and thirsty soul a taste of God’s goodness. ***“This what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words”*** (1 Corinthians 2:13). We all have a part in God’s extraordinary ministry that brings life and salvation to a lost and dying world, and we don’t special training or eloquent speech to reach them, just a willing heart and a love for God’s Word (reference Matthew 28:18-20).

May we be diligent workers in God’s field, and as part of His building program, as we devote ourselves to His Word, and in communion with Him in prayer, and in fellowship with the saints, so we can be built up together and with one accord reveal His praises to this lost and fallen world. May we make the most of every opportunity, in the time we have been given, to stop complaining and start proclaiming the Word of Truth – to preach only Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified! ***“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us, to Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen”*** (Ephesians 3:20-21)

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 91

Considered one of the most beloved Psalms, Psalm 91 offers today’s saint the promise of security when they trust in God. ***“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty”*** (v.1). These beautiful words of the psalmist paint a picture of a young chick nestled under the protective wings of the mother hen. Just as the tabernacle in the wilderness offered the people of Israel the security that the Lord was in their midst, and later the Lord’s Presence between the wings of the cherubim of the Holy of Holies in the temple provided them great peace, today, we, as believers, have the abiding presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit to comfort, protect, and guide us as we walk along this present life in view of our future and eternal home in heaven.

For those who are responsive and willing, the Lord offers His wings as a shelter of comfort, security and protection. He wants His children to learn to depend upon Him and allow Him to provide the protection that any loving Father would for His children. Sadly, some will refuse His loving protection, like the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees, whom Jesus rebuked for being a stumbling block to those who truly sought the Lord and desired to find rest in Him (reference Matthew 23). ***“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing”*** (Matthew 23:37).

This Psalm is a wonderful prayer for any parent who is sending their young “chicks” out into the world for the first time, or to pray over our military who provide our front line shield and defense as they face the realities and dangers of war. This evening may we offer this Psalm as a prayer of praise to our ever-faithful Protector as we nestle up under the security of His wing. All wisdom and honor and glory are His, may we praise and lift Him high, our El Shaddai!

***“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say to the LORD, ‘He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.’
Surely He will save you from the fowler’s snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with His feathers,
and under His wings you will find refuge;
His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.
If you make the Most High your dwelling –
even the LORD, who is my refuge –
then no harm will befall you,
no disaster will come near your tent.
For He will command His angels concerning you
to guard you in all your way;
‘Because he loves me,’ says the LORD,
‘I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges My name.
He will call upon Me, and I will answer him;
I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
With long life will I satisfy him and show him My salvation.’”***
(Psalm 91:1-4, 9-11, 14-16)

***Heavenly Father,
“I long to dwell in Your tent forever
and take refuge in the shelter of Your wings.”
(Psalm 61:4)
Help me to rest in the safety of Your arms
and learn to wait on You for the direction that I need.
Let me not be afraid of the obstacles in my path,
but take advantage of every opportunity You give me
to share Your Word of truth to someone who is
in need of Your refreshment and salvation.***

***Help me to use the portion You give me each day
to “loose the chains of injustice, untie the cords of the yoke,
set the oppressed free, and to break every yoke?”
(Isaiah 58:6)***

***May we, as Your people, work together in harmony to
“rebuild the ancient ruins and raise up the age-old foundations”
Find us to be wise and faithful builders that we might be called,
“Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings”
(Isaiah 58:12)
that Your highway will be built and many will come
through the gates of Your glorious eternal kingdom.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.***

Day 22:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:11

During our devotional time yesterday we got a glimpse of heaven as we read about our eternal home with the Lord. Today, as we place our feet back on the ground, our attention turns to the joy we have while we walk this earth. Do we realize how abundantly blessed we are to know the One, True, Living God who has pledged to be our Protector and Provider of every present need and future blessing (reference Genesis 16:7)? ***“...I am your shield, your very great reward”*** (Genesis 15:1b). The more time we spend with the Lord, getting to know Him more intimately in His Word and communicating with Him in prayer, the more we come to know how good our God is. The new truths and revelations He awakens us to in His Word, the fellowship we enjoy with other believers, the joy we find in serving others, and the faithful and tender way He walks with us through every painful trial, all work together to prove over and over how great His love is toward us and how devoted He is to our care. How can we not, but fall more deeply in love with our Lord, and desire nothing more than to abide more intimately with Him, each and every day?

***“Every good and perfect gift is from above,
coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights,
who does not change like shifting shadows.”
(James 1:17)***

Beloved, our gracious and benevolent heavenly Father does not change. Every thing He has done, since laying the foundation of the world, has been done to express His great love for us, to show us His goodness, and to reveal His glory. God was not created for us, we were created for God. He loves us so much and has spared nothing to show us how great His love is towards us and how much He desires for us to experience sweet fellowship with Him. ***“I am the good Shepherd”*** (John 10:11). We are being led and loved by a good God. Everything about His nature is good. In fact, He is the *only* one who is good (reference Matthew 19:17b). ***“No one is good – except God alone”*** (Mark 10:18b).

Let us bask in the beauty of our good Shepherd today. As we spend time with Him may we recognize that He has our best interest in mind; therefore let us draw near to Him so we will not

miss out on all the good He has for us today. May we become so instep with our good Shepherd that we imitate His goodness in everything we do and say. ***“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work”*** (2 Corinthians 9:8). Ask Him to give you the very best of Himself so you might reflect His goodness to everyone He places in your path. Take time to meditate on His goodness this morning so you will be encouraged, and firmly planted, before you face the world today.

“He is good; His love endures forever”
(2 Chronicles 7:3b)

***“You are good, and what You do is good;
teach me Your decrees.”***
(Psalm 119:68)

***“The LORD is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and rich in love.
The LORD is good to all;
He has compassion on all He has made.”***
(Psalm 145:8-9)

***“Praise the LORD.
How good it is to sing praises to our God,
how pleasant and fitting to praise Him!”***
(Psalm 147:1)

***“Praise the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all His benefits –
who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
who satisfies your desires with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”***
(Psalm 103:2-5)

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Isaiah 9:6; 11:2; 28:29

As defenseless sheep, who are prone to wander and get lost, we need a shepherd who will watch over us, protect us, and guide us. Left to ourselves we will always choose the wrong course and end up missing out on God’s best for us. He created us and therefore knows exactly what we need; and what we need is Him! How blessed we are to have Him as our Shepherd who not only leads us, but also whose desire it is to give us all good things (reference Matthew 7:11).

As our loving heavenly Father, and good Shepherd, the Lord doesn't give us just anything, He gives us His very best. One of God's greatest gifts to His children is the gift of His Holy Spirit. ***"If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*** (Luke 11:13). The Lord has given us the Spirit of Counsel (reference Isaiah 11:2) to guide us down the paths of His goodness as we learn to walk with Him and learn from Him each day. Praise God He knows what's best and has given us exactly what we need. ***"A man can receive only what is given him from heaven"*** (John 3:27).

We are part of God's wonderful plan that began before He laid the foundation of the earth (reference Isaiah 9:6-7); a plan built on the foundation of Jesus Christ – the very One we are called to proclaim in this life! It is vital we stay close to our good Shepherd so we can learn all the good He has for us to learn, and be equipped to do all the good He purposed for us to do. ***"Listen and hear My voice; pay attention and hear what I say...His God instructs him and teaches him the right way...All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, wonderful in counsel and magnificent in wisdom"*** (Isaiah 28:23, 26, 29). We cannot lead others where we haven't been ourselves. We, by nature, are not good, nor can we do good apart from God. ***"There is no one who does good, not even one"*** (Romans 3:12b). We need the Holy Spirit of God to guide us to make good decisions and to walk in God's goodness so we can accomplish His good in the world.

Some of the greatest heroes of the Bible were shepherds; Moses and David were called to become shepherds of God's people after they were shepherds in His fields. They learned first hand the care and attention that sheep need, and how important it was that they have someone to lead and watch over them. The Lord wants us to experience that kind of intimacy with Him so we can learn from Him and be used of Him to show others His goodness and His tender loving care. May we stop our wandering in the world and learn instead to abide in the Lord, and trust our good Shepherd to be the one to meet our every need. May our lives so reflect His goodness that others will be lead to follow Him as well.

***"He has shown you, O man, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God."
(Micah 6:8)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23

Known as "The Shepherd Psalm", Psalm 23 is another beloved Psalms of the Bible and the most quoted chapter of the Old Testament. It is debated whether David wrote this Psalm as a young shepherd boy while he was still tending his father's flocks in the fields or later in life after he had faced many difficult trials and challenging circumstances as he walked with the Lord.

Either way, this psalm offers encouragement to any saint who may be suffering through sorrows or facing great battles.

This next week as we dig a little deeper into folds of Psalm 23, let us rest in the tender fold of our good Shepherd and allow Him to shower us with His loving care as we learn to trust Him more each day to meet our every need. May we let Him lead us to the rich pastures of His goodness where we will find comfort and peace in our time of need. Meditate on Psalm 23 this evening and offer up a prayer of praise for how gracious and good He is. *God is good, all the time! All the time, He is good! Thank You, Jesus, for how good You are to me!*

***“Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth.
Worship the LORD with gladness;
come before Him with joyful songs.
Know that the LORD is God.
It is He who made us, and we are His;
we are His people, the sheep of His pasture.
Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise;
give thanks to Him and praise His name.
For the LORD is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.”
(Psalm 100)***

***Heavenly Father,
“I will praise You for what You have done;
in Your name I will hope, for Your name is good.
I will praise You in the presence of Your saints.”
(Psalm 52:9)
You are good, You are good,
You are so good to me.
I don’t deserve the countless ways
You show Your love to me.
You have spared nothing to show me Your love,
and have given Your very best to me.
I am eternally grateful for the goodness You
have shown to me.
May my life, in some small way,
bless Your heart today.
And may You see the good in me
as I daily walk in Your way.
Thank You for the tender way You have
cared for me today.
May You find me as devoted to You
as You have been to Me.
Be glorified in my life today, I pray.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.***

Day 23:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:11

When God created the world His first creative act was brought forth with speech, ***“Let there be light”*** (Genesis 1:3a). When God saw the light, He saw that it was good (reference Genesis 1:4a); and He separated the light from the darkness; not because there was anything threatening in the darkness, but so it could function along with the light to bless and sustain life. When all His creative work was complete He saw all that He had made, and ***“it was very good”*** (v.31a, emphasis added). Everything that comes from God’s hand is good. There is no good thing in this world that didn’t originate from His benevolent hand. ***“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights...”*** (James 1:17a). When the Father sent His most perfect gift into the world, His Son Jesus Christ, He gave the world the greatest good the world would ever know. What makes God good is not just because He is who He says He is, but also because everything He does confirms how very good He is. With every word He speaks, and in everything He does, He proves His love over and over.

***“I am the good Shepherd.
The good Shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.”
(John 10:11)***

Jesus expressed His love for us not only in words, but also with action. He didn’t just talk about His love, He showed it – by dying for us! ***“Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrated His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us”*** (Romans 5:7-8). Jesus willingly and sacrificially laid down His life to save us. Most shepherds of His day put their lives on the line to protect their flock, but they expected to come through the night alive. Jesus, our good Shepherd, purposely died to save us – once and for all – from the enemy’s, of sin and death, that pursued us. We were once under the power of sin, but Jesus, in His goodness, put to death all that was bad – the evil and the sin.

***“For Christ died for sins once and for all,
the righteous for the unrighteous,
to bring you to God.
He was put to death in the body,
but made alive by the Spirit.”
(1 Peter 3:18)***

Our “good” Shepherd doesn’t just guard us from the evil of this dark world, He went to task and defeated that evil on our behalf. By His nature, God is inherently good, and everything He does is good, therefore He must rid the world of anything evil or bad that would dare to pollute or defile the good He has created. He created us for His pleasure, and for us to enjoy the fellowship with Him that He desires with us, we need to be clothed in His goodness. When Christ died for us we were “neither righteous nor good, but sinners.” Our good Shepherd, did what was necessary to make us good so we could experience the goodness of His abundantly blessed and eternal life.

This morning, praise the Lord for doing the work necessary to turn you, His “good” creation, into His “very good” creation, through His atoning and sacrificial work on the cross. Repent of those areas of your life that you have allowed compromise to pollute or defile the good work that He has done in your life, and ask the Lord to continue His work to make you the very best work of His hand. Submit yourself to His capable, creative, and compassionate hands. Trust Him...everything He does is good!

***“This is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us
and sent His Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”
(1 John 4:10)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 1 John 3:16-18

Jesus gave His life for us as a demonstration of the Father’s love and goodness towards sinful mankind. He proved His love, not only in words, but with action. His desire is that we would imitate His good actions, by not only receiving His extraordinary, sacrificial gift, but by sharing in His truth by doing the same. ***“This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down His life for us...let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth”*** (1 John 3:16, 18).

We are not being asked to literally lay down our physical lives and die, we are simply being asked to help a friend in need; but the struggle and the cost can sometimes feel quite the same and cause even the strongest saint to disobey. ***“Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command”*** (John 15:13-14). Everything in our flesh wars for self-preservation, while the Spirit calls us to self-sacrifice. We are called, by Christ, to share in His suffering, and as His friends we should desire to please Him; after all He died for us. God calls us to lay down our life for our friends [note that the Greek word “friend” describes one who is part of an “inner circle” around a king]. As friends of our King, we have the distinct, and divine, privilege to get up close and personal with our Lord and be let in on His secrets of the kingdom. The more we get to know Him the more we learn that His love calls for obedience.

Jesus demonstrated for us the type of conduct required of His friends and followers. ***“[He] gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good”*** (Titus 2:14). As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, we should be prepared to follow Him to the death – the death of ourselves! Our love toward our brothers, should be the same as Christ, personal, sacrificial, and obedient. True love is active love. We should desire what is good, not only for ourselves, but for our friends. ***“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed”*** (1 Peter 3:13-14a).

Beloved, one of the most difficult demonstrations of God’s love is when we are called to love, as He loves, when we have been hurt by those we love the most. Today, the church is under a powerful, strategic, and demonic attack aimed at destroying one of God’s most sacred

institutions: marriage. The marriage bond between a man and a woman is a beautiful illustration of God's sacred bond between Himself and His Bride, the Church. Sadly, the enemy has infiltrated the church and wreaked havoc on this holy and sacred institution. It is time for the church to awaken to this destruction and take the necessary strides to be strengthened to stand and wage war against this enemy that is not our flesh and blood (reference Ephesians 6:12). The covenant bond of marriage is a sacred bond that must not be taken lightly (reference Genesis 2:23-24). We should be offended that Satan would dare try to steal away one of God's most precious gifts from us (reference Mark 10:6-9). May Christian husbands and wives commit from this day forward to lay down their lives for one another and be willing to suffer the pain to stand in the gap for the weaker vessel that the enemy may be attacking (remember we are all being sanctified in Christ and while we may be at different points on the path we are all heading in the same direction and we need to encourage and exhort one another along the way (remember you married "for better or worse"); and be willing to hold each other up if one should go astray or lose their way – no matter how difficult that may be – this calls for pressing into God and constant and fervent prayer!). May husbands and wives open their eyes to see the bigger kingdom picture and recognize the enemy wants to hurt the heart of God by tearing apart His beloved Bride by attacking her where her strength resides – the family! May Christian married couples unite under the sacred and holy covenant they signed and sealed in the presence and witness of Holy God (reference Malachi 3:14) and declare boldly to stand united together against the enemy of God who wants to rob them of their legacy and their children's future inheritance of faith in God. May we begin to pray fervently for Christian marriages to be strengthened so that God's Bride will become strong. We will not see the victory we want in the world until we gain victory first in the church! We all have many friends and family members who are hurting over their marriages. Pray for them to remain steadfast and strong in their faith in God and to seek Him more fervently in His Word and prayer. Pray for the prodigals that have walked away from God's blessing for their home and for the "standers" who are faithfully praying for them to return home. Pray for husbands and wives to arm themselves with God's truth on this matter and be willing to be obedient even if it hurts and the suffering is at times unbearable. Pray for godly friends and counselors to come alongside these hurting homes and offer encouragement and truth and a shoulder to cry on. Pray for godly men who will not leave their post as watchmen on the walls of their home – but be willing to take their positions in prayer and protect their homes from the enemy who is being allowed entrance because too many have been enticed away. Pray for the men and women and children who have been wounded by separation and divorce that they may feel God's embrace and experience a taste of His goodness in the midst of the garbage they may be walking through. Pray that God will have His way and bring salvation to His people, even in the midst of the battle. Dearly beloved friends of God, it's time we lay down our lives in prayer!

***"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:1

Jesus Christ is our good Shepherd who died for the sheep. He knew exactly what we needed and He willingly laid down His life to obtain it for us. How blessed we are that while He died for us, He also lives for us in heaven and continues to work on our behalf providing for our every need (reference Hebrews 13:20-21). ***“The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not be in want”*** (Psalm 23:1). He has provided all that we need to gain our entrance into our glorious eternal home with Him in heaven and provides all that we need to experience an abundant and fruitful life on this earth, as we learn to abide in Him. ***“...for those who fear Him lack nothing...those who seek the LORD lack no good thing”*** (Psalm 34:9b, 10b).

The Lord is our ever faithful Shepherd who longs to give us all good things if we will learn to trust in Him. May we draw near to our loving Shepherd and listen closely to the sound of His heart and hear what He has to say from His Word regarding our present circumstances we are facing. May we be strengthened by the nourishment He gives us from His Word and as we wait upon Him in prayer; and may we be obedient to His promptings whether we are called to suffer for the sake of another or sacrifice to meet their need. Worship Him with reverence and awe for the wonderful ways He has blessed and filled your life with all good things. He loves you so much and wants to bless you with His very best, even if it means inviting you into the secret place in the court of the King to experience His deepest pain. Be encouraged that you have been given a privilege position and have gained entrance to the heart of the King! Rest in His care – you will lack no good thing!

***“And my God will meet all your needs
according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:19)***

***Heavenly Father,
“Let [us] give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love
and His wonderful deeds for men,
for He satisfies the thirsty and fills
the hungry with good things.”
(Psalm 107:8-9)***

***Thank You for all the ways You prove
Your love to me over and over.
I have never been in want for anything.
Forgive me for my ingratitude when You
have given nothing but the best of Yourself to me.
Help me to praise You through my
deepest pain realizing You have allowed
me to feel Your heart on a matter that
You will use later to bless someone else who
has a greater need.
I can’t help but fall more deeply in love
with You each and every day
as I sit in Your presence and gaze at Your
beauty in the way You work in my life***

*and show me through Your Word.
Thank you for all the good You
have brought into My life today.
“Then we Your people,
the sheep of Your pasture,
will praise You forever;
from generation to generation
we will recount Your praise.”
(Psalm 79:13)
Be glory for ever and ever.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Day 24:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:12-13

Under the Old Covenant system of sacrifices the sheep died to make atonement for sins, but with the New Covenant our good Shepherd was the One who died once and for all for our sins (reference Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 26, 28). We have a devoted and loving Shepherd who willingly died in our place to rescue us from the consequences of sin and death. Unlike the hired hand in our Scripture reading this morning, Jesus was not interested in receiving compensation for the work He did, He was sent to pay the price with the work He did. ***“For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect”*** (1 Peter 1:18-19).

Jesus’ total devotion to His sheep prevented Him from running away from the task He was sent to do; He knew His suffering and death would lead to salvation and eternal life for His sheep, and He willingly laid down His life to accomplish that goal. No other shepherd could do the work that our good Shepherd, Jesus, was sent to do. He was the only perfect, sinless sacrifice that could pay the price; no animal or sinful human could ever do. ***“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”*** (2 Corinthians 5:21).

***“I Myself will tend My sheep and have them lie down,
declares the Sovereign LORD.
I will search for the lost and bring back the strays.
I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak,
but the sleek and the strong I will destroy.
I will shepherd the flock with justice.”
(Ezekiel 34:15-16)***

Our faithful and good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, did not entrust the work of redemption into the hands of a hireling. The work was far too important and could not rest in the hands of someone who would run at the first sign of danger or pain. This work required One who would be willing to suffer humiliation, persecution, pain, shame and eventual death for the sake of the lives of the

sheep. Only one True Shepherd would possibly do. This morning, take time to praise the Lord for your salvation that came at the price of His precious blood and offer up a prayer of gratitude as you walk in the rich pasture He has provided for you. With every step you take today keep in mind the price that was paid for you to walk in freedom and with liberty, and take every precaution to keep yourself from being lured back in to the shackles of sin that once so easily entangled you. He gave up everything for us. Will we not do the same for Him?

***“He tends His flock like a shepherd:
He gathers the lambs in His arms
and carries them close to His heart;
He gently leads those that have young.”
(Isaiah 40:11)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Ezekiel 34

Jesus set for us an example of true sacrifice that we are expected to follow. He came not to be served, but to serve; and He calls us to do the same (reference Matthew 20:26-28). His desire is that we would experience His peace and security as we learn to trust in Him and walk with Him. He is our good Shepherd and He will not lead us astray. He will never leave us or forsake us (reference Hebrews 13:5). He is always with us and He will always provide His best for us; if we place our trust in Him and are willing to walk in obedience. He is our loving Shepherd who wants to care for us.

***“For this is what the Sovereign LORD says:
I Myself will search for My sheep and look after them.
I will tend them in a good pasture.
I Myself will tend My sheep and have them lie down.
I will save My sheep and they will no longer be plundered.
I will send down showers in season;
there will be showers of blessing.
The people will be secure in their land.
They will live in safety, and no one will make them afraid.”
(Ezekiel 34: 11, 14a, 15, 22, 26b, 27b, 28b)***

The shepherds, in our Scripture reading this afternoon, were not the least bit interested in caring for the sheep; they had their own selfish interests in mind. Their lack of concern for the sheep, whom the Lord had entrusted to their care, brought judgment upon their heads. ***“I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for My flock”*** (v.10a). Praise God that He is a righteous and just God, but also a compassionate and forgiving God who will not let the sheep out of His sight or His grasp.

Jesus set the supreme example on how we are to lead (and how we are to be led!) He is the high and holy standard we are to live our lives by. His example should be the plumb line we

measure all our leaders by, and the measuring line by which we determine who we are, or are not, to follow. If we don't learn to walk in the light as He is in the light we will inevitably accept the darkness and stumble and fall. ***"If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin"*** (1 John 1:6-7).

Today we are in desperate need of godly, faithful men who will rise up and lead us! We need pastor-shepherds who will lead us with knowledge and understanding (reference Jeremiah 3:15). We need our men to be strong spiritual leaders and faithful prayer warriors. The enemy has been leading a successful campaign to tear down the role of the father in our society. In accomplishing this objective the devil has stripped many generations of their ability to grasp the concept of the Heavenly Father's love. Satan wants nothing more than to hurt the heart of God and by tearing down the role of the father and stripping homes of the father's presence and authority he has been accomplishing his goal.

We need to pray for our men: our pastors, husbands, and sons to seek after the Lord with all their hearts that they might experience the full weight of the heavenly Father's love so they can lead with love. We need strong, knights-in-shining- "spiritual" armor who will be willing to go to battle against the evil powers in the spiritual realm who are bent on destroying our homes and ultimately God's kingdom work. We need our men to take up their positions as watchmen on the walls of our homes, our church, our community, our country and to pray fervently and continuously for our peace, protection, and security. Men who are willing to take a stand against the enemy by living pure and holy lives, instead of welcoming the enemy into their homes because they have entertained sin, immorality, and compromise. We need our men to stand up and fight with the weapons of spiritual warfare and not lay down and die because they have bought the lies or have been enticed away by the ways of the world. We need husbands and fathers who will raise up the standard and reclaim their positions as the spiritual leaders of their homes that God has created them for. You are the captain of your ship (as my husband often says) if the ship is sinking it's your fault. If you try to do it in your own strength you will surely suffer defeat, but if you rest in God's strength, and follow His lead, victory will be yours! This afternoon, pray for our men to be strong in the Lord, equipped with His Word, and dressed daily in their spiritual armor so they can effectively lead and experience God's blessing for our homes. Pray for them to be faithful prayer warriors willing to rise up early to take their positions on the walls and to never cease to pray to make sure our homes are safe and secure from any enemy attack. Pray for their protection from the temptations of the world that would entice the away from their God-given call as spiritual leaders, and for the protection of their time to devote to the Word of God and prayer. Pray for them to lead by example – the example of Jesus Christ! Therefore, may we never cease to pray fervently for our men!

"Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them.

Be strong and very courageous.

Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go.

Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it.

Then you will be prosperous and successful.

Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous.

Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."

(Joshua 1:6-9)

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:2

Jesus Christ is our good Shepherd who died for the sheep. He knew exactly what we needed and He willingly laid down His life to obtain it for us. He has led us into the safety and security of His fold; He has saved us from our enemies and has blessed us with eternal life. In Him we find a life of contentment and rest. He daily provides us refreshment as we walk close with Him.

“They will neither hunger or thirst, nor will the desert heat or the sun beat upon them. He who has compassion on them will guide them and lead them beside springs of water” (Isaiah 49:10). How blessed we are to have a good Shepherd who leads us with compassion into His rich pasture where we can experience an abundant and fruitful life as we drink deeply from His “spring of living water” and feast daily on His Word.

***“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not be in want.
He makes me to lie down in green pastures,
He leads me beside quiet waters.”
(Psalm 23:1-2)***

Jesus led by example and gave us the very best of Himself. Our loving Lord leads us with gentleness and compassion, and it should be our greatest desire and priority to follow Him and imitate Him. May we seek daily to stay close to our good Shepherd so that we will not be led astray and taken captive by a world that seeks our destruction. ***“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray”*** (1 John 3:7a). This evening offer a prayer of gratitude and praise to the One who leads you beside the still waters and continually pours out His blessings upon you. Pray that you would be a good example of His goodness and grace and lead others to drink deeply from that life-giving spring!

***Heavenly Father,
You have led me “beside streams of water”
and on “a level path where I will not stumble”
(Jeremiah 31:9)
You daily allow me the privilege of
“feasting on the abundance of Your house;
You give [me] drink from Your river of delights”
(Psalm 36:8)
Thank you for all the blessings You***

*continually pour out on me.
You bless me far beyond what I
could possibly need, help me to share
from my abundance with those who are in need.
Father protect me with Your loving hand
and "lead me not into temptation,
but deliver me from the evil one"
(Matthew 6:13)
Help me to stay close to You as I
feast on the great provision of Your Word
and enjoy these quiet moments with You in prayer.
May my life be an example of Your
goodness and grace to my family, my friends,
and those You desire to reach with Your love.
Take pleasure in my obedience, my trust, and my faith,
and be glorified in all that I say and do.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

Day 25:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:14-16

Our good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, knows our every need. He knows our greatest need. He knows us. A good shepherd is one who knows his sheep; and because he knows them, he knows how best to care for them. When we know someone really well we know their likes, their dislikes, their fears, their personalities, their habits (good and bad), etc. Because we know them so well we know how to relate to them, meet their needs, and minister to them. Jesus knows us intimately; He created us after all (reference Psalm 139:13). ***"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart..."*** (Jeremiah 1:5a). Because He is so intimately connected to us He knows exactly how to care for us, meet our needs, and lead us in the direction that will accomplish His intended purpose and path for our lives. When we allow God to work in our lives we learn how much He cares for us and loves us and our own trust and love for Him begins to grow. The more we grow in the knowledge of our Lord and in our understanding of how He cares for His people the better we know how to relate to Him and express our love and devotion to Him, realizing His great desire is for an intimate, abiding relationship with each one of His sheep.

***"I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me –
just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father –
and I lay down My life for the sheep."
(John 10:14-15)***

Jesus desires an intimate connection with all His sheep, but His first order of business is to bring them into His fold. There is only One Shepherd, and only one flock – made up of believing Jews

and Gentiles. ***“I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to My voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd”*** (v. 16). Jesus came into the world to die for the sheep so we could be united as one. The Lord’s original covenant with Abraham was not just for the nation of Israel, that blessing would extend to the whole world (reference Genesis 12:1-3). ***“...Jesus would die for the Jewish nation, and not only for that nation but also for the scattered children of God, to bring them together and make them one”*** (John 11:51b, 52).

***“The Sovereign LORD declares –
He who gathers the exiles of Israel:
‘I will gather still others to them
besides those already gathered.’
(Isaiah 56:8)***

A shepherd does not call his sheep randomly, he calls only those who are his own. ***“He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out”*** (John 10:3b). This should humble us, and bring comfort to us, knowing that we are secure in Him and that He will faithfully bring all His sheep into the fold at the appointed time. ***“For God’s gifts and His call are irrevocable”*** (Romans 22:29). His plan and His purpose will prevail and cannot be thwarted by man, or Satan (Proverbs 19:21). ***“Surely as I have planned, so it will be, and as I have purposed, so it will stand...This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the LORD Almighty has purposed and who can thwart Him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?”*** (Isaiah 14:24, 26-27).

Our good Shepherd laid down His life to accomplish His purposes for all mankind – to die for the sins of the world. ***“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in him and he in God”*** (1 John 4:14-15). Jesus stretched out His arms on the cross to embrace the vast field of the world before Him, but only those who hear His voice and receive His gift of salvation will be included in His flock. Today, that field is ripe for the harvest (reference John 4:35) and He is looking for workers who are willing to go out and gather the sheep into the fold (reference Luke 10:2). What a privilege it is to be called children of God and to be counted as one of the sheep of His flock; may we not waste the gifts and calling we have been given to go out into the world and “make disciples” of all nations (reference Matthew 28:19-20), rather, may we be found faithful to “rebuild the walls” (reference Isaiah 60:10) so the work of God can be completed!

***“Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
‘May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels.’
For the sake of my brothers and friends,
I will say, ‘Peace be within you.’
For the sake of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek your prosperity.”
(Psalm 122:6-9)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Ephesians 2:11-19

All mankind is in need of a Savior. God called Abram, a Gentile, out of his own country and people, to be set apart and become the father of a new nation through which the Lord would use to bless and help the Gentiles (reference Genesis 12:2-3). ***“I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles”*** (Isaiah 42:6). The Lord revealed Himself through the Jews, giving them His Word, and, through them, He gave the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ (reference Romans 9:4-5); through whom He would reconcile them to one another and to Himself.

***“For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one
and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,
by abolishing in His flesh the law with its commandments and regulations.
His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two,
thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them
to God through the cross, by which He put to death their hostility.”
(Ephesians 2:14-16)***

The dividing wall between Jew and Gentile, and God and sinful man, was torn down by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Just as an individual believer experiences a new birth in Christ the moment they are saved, Christ's redemptive work on the cross gave birth to a new “man” – the body of Christ – the Church (reference Galatians 3:26-29). ***“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!”*** (2 Corinthians 5:7). With Jesus Christ as our cornerstone and foundation we are being built together to become ***“a holy temple in the Lord”*** (Ephesians 2:21). The Holy Spirit of God dwells within us and we are now called, equipped with His Word and enabled through His power (reference 1 Corinthians 12:13), to carry forth the ministry of reconciliation as we, Christ's ambassadors, carry the good news of the gospel of grace to the world (reference 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

How glorious and wonderful the works of God! Even before He laid the foundation of the world our Sovereign God laid the foundation for His Church, setting in motion His plan to bring His salvation to the whole earth by separating out the Jews, as His chosen nation, so they would radiate God's light to the Gentiles, who in turn would be united with the Jews, erasing all lines of separation, and establishing a new, holy nation. ***“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were not a people of God, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy”*** (1 Peter 2:9-10). By uniting Jew and Gentile into the church He has made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms ***“the manifold wisdom of God”*** (reference Ephesians 3:10-11). ***“Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable His judgments and His paths beyond tracing out!”*** (Romans 11:33).

Beloved, how blessed we are to be participants in God's amazing plan of reconciliation. May we take our commissioning seriously and go forward with boldness, declaring His Word and His praises to the world. There is no salvation apart from faith in Christ Jesus and there can be no faith apart from the Word of God. The world will not hear of the wondrous news of salvation if we are not obedient to declare His Word (reference Romans 10:14-17). We have been given a priceless treasure from the Lord and we must not waste it. Time is running out! Pray for boldness in every opportunity to share His Truth today. The world is starving for truth, but we cannot help them if we are but poor starvelings ourselves because we have neglected to

feast from the rich banqueting table that has been spread before us each and every day. May we become intentional and disciplined in the time we spend with the Lord in His Word and in prayer.

***“For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile –
the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him,
for, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’
(Romans 10:12-13)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:3

Our Lord is in the building program. The work He is involved in is all about creating, building, restoring, “making all things new”. His atoning work on the cross paid the price for us to have a new life – a new beginning in Christ Jesus. As we continue our reading of Psalm 23 this evening, we find our ever-faithful and good Shepherd continuing His work in our life by ***“restoring [our] souls”*** and ***“guiding [us] in paths of righteousness”***. He desires to revive our hearts through His Word and lead us to deeper levels of intimacy so we can experience the blessings of His righteousness in our lives (reference Matthew 5:6) and ultimately bring glory to His name. ***“...for His name’s sake.”*** As we humbly follow our loving Shepherd we will experience His faithfulness to not only guide us to new levels of growth and spiritual prosperity, but also to watch His hand at work as He continues to build His kingdom. ***“He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them His way”*** (Psalm 25:9).

May we be willing participants in His kingdom building program, realizing that there are many hungry souls just waiting in the fields for a fresh Word from God, which we have been entrusted to offer them. ***“The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul”*** (Psalm 19:7). Tonight, let us continue in our prayers for strong families and an awakened Bride, so that the Body of Christ can be strengthened and unified to accomplish the work He has prepared for us, and refreshed us, to do. May we see a revival of righteousness and holiness in the coming months ahead as we continue to pray and do our part to be strong in the Word and share His truth with the world! May His wonderful Name be glorified throughout the earth with everything we say and do! ***“Yet He saved them for His name’s sake, to make His mighty power known”*** (Psalm 106:8).

Heavenly Father,

***“Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
His love endures forever.”
(Psalm 107:1)***

***“Since You are my rock and my fortress,
for the sake of Your name lead me and guide me.”
(Psalm 31:3)***

***“Thanks be to God, who always leads us
in triumphal procession in Christ and through us
spreads everywhere the fragrance of the
knowledge of Him.”
(2 Corinthians 2:14)***

***Help me to daily draw near to You and find all my
refreshment from You as I drink deeply from the
living water of Your Word. May others see You in
me, in the way I act, and the words I speak and
may my life give off the sweet aroma of your goodness
and love wherever You set my feet to walk.***

***“...guide me with Your counsel,
and afterward you will take me into glory.”
(Psalm 73:2)***

In Jesus’ wonderful Name. Amen.

Day 26:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:17-18

Our good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, longs for communion with His flock, the sheep of His pasture. He desires for us to have the same kind of fellowship He shares with the Father. He stepped down out of heaven to erase the dividing line that was keeping us from experiencing this sweet communion with God. He laid His life in the gap so we could cross over into His rich pasture of forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life with Him in heaven.

***“The reason My Father loves Me is that I lay down My life –
only to take it up again.
No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of My own accord.
I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again.
This command I received from My Father.”
(John 10:17-18)***

Jesus gave up His life willingly and obediently to accomplish the will of the Father. His will is that we would have life through His Son, Jesus Christ, and live eternally with Him in heaven. Jesus died so we could have life – an abundant and fruitful life on this earth, and an eternal life with the

Father in heaven. ***“...He is not the God of the dead but of the living”*** (Matthew 22:32b). Jesus Christ was sent and given all authority from the Father to put death to death. ***“For just as the Father raises the dead and gives life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it”*** (John 5:21). Only those who believe in the Son of God will experience this life; those who do not will suffer death (reference John 8:24). The choice we make is a matter of life or death! ***“I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps My word, he will never see death”*** (John 8:51).

***“We were therefore buried with Him through baptism unto death
in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory
of the Father, we too may live a new life.”
(Romans 6:4)***

The Father gave His Son authority to lay down His life and to take it up again. No one took His life from Him, He gave it as an act of the will – the will of the Father and the Son’s desire to please the Father (reference John 6:38; 8:28-29). ***“You would have no power over Me if it were not given to you from above”*** (John 19:11). Jesus’ life was placed in His own hands and He gave it freely for us so we could have life in Him. His death and resurrection were all part of God’s Sovereign plan for us to experience life in Him. ***“Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter His glory”*** (Luke 24:26). Our good Shepherd loves us so much that He willingly suffered and bled and died so we would not have to face eternity separated from the Father. Once we grasp the reality of the awesome choice He made to offer Himself as a sacrifice for us, we can’t help but be compelled to lay our lives at His feet. This morning, as we reflect on the extraordinary sacrifice our Savior made for us, let us take time to consider what sacrifices in our life we are making on His behalf to see that the work He accomplished, on the cross and at the resurrection, is continuing to be made known (reference Matthew 28:18-20). Are we living our lives in the power of His resurrection life? All the power and authority He was given to accomplish the Father’s will He pours into our lives so we can die to ourselves and live for Him. May we stop dwelling in the valley of the shadow of death and start living in the fullness of the life we have been given through Jesus Christ!

***“But God raised Him from the dead,
freeing Him from the agony of death,
because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on Him.
David said this about Him: ‘I saw the LORD always before me.
Because he is at my right hand I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me
to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the paths of life;
You will fill me with joy in Your presence.”
(Acts 2:24-28)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-18

The abundant life that Jesus provides for us came at the cost of His own suffering and death. One of the most difficult things to understand about the love of God is the suffering He allows in the lives of those He loves. The heavenly Father gave His only Son to suffer and die that we might have life; and Jesus willingly chose to suffer and face death on our behalf. ***“But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone. In bringing many sons to glory, it was fitting that God, for whom and through whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering”*** (Hebrews 2:9-10). Our loving Shepherd counted the cost and didn’t hesitate to do what was necessary for us to be able to be counted as one of the sheep of His flock.

“Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush Him and cause Him to suffer, and though the LORD makes His life a guilt offering, He will see His offspring and prolong His days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in His hand. After the suffering of His soul, He will see the light of life and be satisfied.”
(Isaiah 53:10-11a)

Jesus laid down His glory and put on our garment of flesh so He could take our place and kill the flesh and conquer death; in doing so He provided for us a glorious new garment of salvation and a robe of righteousness, and will bestow on us a crown of glory and honor. Today, our great high priest remains clothed in a garment of human flesh for all eternity; this badge of honor He wears as an eternal reminder of the price He paid for us. We will one day look upon our Savior-Shepherd and cast our crowns at His feet – for He alone is worthy to receive glory and honor and thanks and praise!

“For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.”
(Hebrews 2:17-18)

Our loving Shepherd sympathizes with us in our sufferings, because He has suffered as we have, and more than we ever will. It was the Lord’s will that He should suffer so that His purposes for mankind would be fulfilled; and we, who are united with Christ, will also suffer if we are to be used of Him. ***“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body”*** (2 Corinthians 4:8-10). He is the potter and we are the clay (reference Isaiah 64:8), and our faithful Master places a firm hold on us as He shapes and conforms us to His will and good purposes; He then places us in the fiery kiln of trial and affliction to purify us and make us a holy and worthy vessel through which He will use to let His light shine through (reference Malachi 3:2-3). And when that clay pot is finally broken, all the work of His grace and truth, that He has poured into our lives, will pour out to refresh a weary world and radiate His light and glory. Beloved, we should never be surprised at the trials we go through, for they have been sifted through the nail scarred hands of our loving Savior who has already walked that path before us and prepared the way for us to see His glory in a way we never thought possible. Whatever trial you are facing today, whatever pain you are experiencing, whatever the ache of your heart may be, trust that the Lord has a future purpose that will far outweigh the present pain and suffering. May that overwhelming desire for peace and healing that is nagging at your heart become an unquenchable thirst that leads you to “the spring of living water” where He alone can satisfy your thirst (reference John 4:14). Let Him fill your clay jar today as you drink deeply from His “river of delights” and don’t be surprised when the day will come that He breaks you open to pour you out as a drink offering to quench another thirsty soul (reference Isaiah 44:3)! Allow yourself to be poured out and worn out for His purposes – there’s glory waiting on the other side! Praise Him

that He finds you worthy to be used for such a noble purpose (reference Romans 9:21; 2 Timothy 2:20-21).

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:4

Our good and faithful Shepherd has paved the path before us with His own blood, and tears, and suffering. There is not a single step we will take in this life that He has not already walked before us and lovingly and thoughtfully prepared the way to achieve what He has purposed for our life and His Kingdom.

***“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil, for You are with me;
Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”
(Psalm 23:4)***

Jesus faced the great enemy’s of sin and death and the painful reality of separation from the Father. He is the only one that has ever done this and the only one that ever will. His work was finished on the cross and we have no reason to fear when we place our trust in Him. Jesus reassures with His word, ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”*** (Hebrews 13:5b). He is the only one who endured having the Father forsake Him, as He took our sins upon Himself and hung on the cross. He sweat drops of blood, as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, agonizing over the painful reality of facing those excruciating hours on the cross without the Father’s presence (reference Luke 22:44). He suffered and endured that painful separation to save us from ever having to experience the devastating reality of eternal separation from the Father’s love.

Our loving Lord will spare no form of discipline, chastisement, suffering, or pain to save us from experiencing being separated from the Father. He alone knows what it means to walk through the dark valley of the shadow of death. He knows firsthand the agony of having to face the darkness separated from the Father’s love. Because of this, our Savior labors in prayer before the throne, as our ever faithful intercessor, that no none would ever experiencing such a terrible fate (reference Hebrews 7:25). Beloved, we may not fully understand the painful trial we may be facing, but we can trust that the loving hand of our Shepherd is guiding the way for us to experience a deeper level of devotion and trust that could come to us no other way. It’s been said that “Faith is our walk, but fellowship is our rest.” May we find rest in Him today as we spend these intimate moments abiding with Him in His Word and prayer and may our trust grow in Him more each and every day as the trials, difficulties, or pains come our way. May we be willing to submit to Him as He guides us with His rod and staff and be thankful that He has given us this reassuring sign that He is with us and Has not left us to wander on our own.

***“Your righteousness reaches to the skies, O God,
You who have done great things. Who, O God, is like You?
Though You have made me see troubles, many and bitter,***

*You will restore my life again;
from the depths of the earth You will again bring me up.
You will increase my honor and comfort me once again”
(Psalm 71:19-21)*

*Heavenly Father,
“For You are great and do marvelous deeds;
You alone are God.
Teach me Your way, O LORD,
and I will walk in Your truth;
give me an undivided heart,
that I may fear Your name.
I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify Your name forever.
For great is Your love toward me;
You have delivered me from the depths of the grave.”
(Psalm 86:10-13)*

*Fill me daily with Your truth and make me
a worthy vessel of Your righteousness.
Break my heart for what breaks Yours
and help me to not run from the pain when
You allow me to be broken that Your glory
may be revealed to the world. Let Your living water
pour forth and become the healing salve
that will bring restoration and revival to Your land.
For I glory of Your Name I pray.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Day 27:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:3-5; 25-27;

Sheep are not driven like cattle, they are led. They are led by a shepherd who calls to them, and they obediently and willingly respond because they know their shepherds voice. There can be several flocks of sheep in one fold, and when the watchman opens the door and the shepherd calls to his sheep they will respond and follow him out, because they recognize and know his

voice. Sheep may wander off and get into trouble, but they will never follow a stranger, because they do not know his voice (reference John 10:5). ***“The watchman opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice”*** (vv. 3-4).

Our good Shepherd willingly laid down His life to save us and provide for us an abundant life on this earth and to secure for us an eternity in heaven with the Father. We, as His sheep, are simply called to respond to His voice and receive His gift and follow Him. He delivered us from sin and death and He will lead us to experience the blessed and abundant life of fellowship with Him and the Father, but we must follow Him. However, to follow Him we must first know His voice. ***“My sheep listen to My voice, I know them, and they follow Me”*** (John 10:27).

The Word of God is the voice of God. We learn to discern God’s voice through His Word. His is the voice of love. He gave us His Word, therefore, He will keep it. ***“God is not a man, that He should lie, nor a son of man, that He should change His mind. Does He speak and then not act? Does He promise and not fulfill?”*** (Numbers 23:19). Every promise, every precept, every statute, every command, every decree will be fulfilled. Not one of His word’s will fall to the ground, but will accomplish what He has purposed for it (reference Isaiah 55:11). The work He accomplished on the cross opened the way for us to enter into an eternal life of fellowship and prosperity and peace with Him. His should be the one voice we long to hear when we wake up each day and the only voice we commit to following as we learn to trust and obey.

Our good Shepherd longs for us to love Him and to focus our full and undivided attention upon Him. His desire is to captivate us and lead us to experience deeper fellowship and union with Him, as He has with the Father. He longs to get us all by ourselves so He can have us all to Himself; then He can pour Himself into us and produce in us a passion for intimacy with Him and obedience towards Him. ***“Blessed is the man who listens to Me, watching daily at My doors, waiting at My doorway”*** (Proverbs 8:34). We must become deliberate about our pursuit of God. This is more than setting aside the time to spend with Him in His Word and in prayer, it also requires discipline to remain still, to be quiet, and to give Him room to speak to us. ***“Be still, and know that I am God”*** (Psalm 46:10). There are so many wondrous things that we have missed or forfeited because we have been too busy or distracted to remain still long enough to hear our Shepherd’s voice. His is the voice of the “Majestic Glory” that will penetrate and profoundly impact our heart only if we are willing to humble ourselves in silence and in the secret place, and patiently wait for Him to speak (reference 2 Peter 1:17-18). ***“In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength”*** (Isaiah 30:15).

To adequately hear from the Lord we must be totally surrendered to Him. There is nothing else of greater importance to learn than to yield ourselves to the secret place, to be still before the Lord, and learn to discern His voice. No other pursuit will yield the impact and the rich rewards that private time with the Lord will do. If we are not willing to spend time with the Lord in quiet meditation upon His Word and in communion with Him in prayer, we might need to ask ourselves what is it that we have discovered to be more worthy of our time than to spend time with the One who is our Source of all life, peace, provision, and prosperity. Maybe it’s not that we have something better to do, but simply because we are afraid of what He might reveal if we allow Him to get that close to us? Beloved, it is so much better to yield yourself in obedience to Him now, than to have to suffer His hand of discipline later. Fasting, feasting on the Word of God, and prayer are the most proactive disciplines we can do to nurture our relationship with the Lord and equip us for the life He has prepared for us to live. Our loving Heavenly Father wants these disciplines to be part of our lives and we, as parents, should impress them upon our children so they too can live and walk in peace, confidence, and security following the sound of their Shepherd-Savior’s voice! ***“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest”*** (Exodus 33:14).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: *Filled with His Power* – Read Matthew 16:21-28; Mark 8:31-9:1; Luke 9:22-27)

When we place ourselves in a position of submission before the Lord and obediently follow our Shepherd wherever He leads us, we avail ourselves as an instrument for His kingdom building program, instead of a stumbling block that will hinder it. ***“Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men”*** (Matthew 16:23). We discern the mind and will of God through the time we dedicate meditating on God’s Word and spending intimate time with Him in prayer; learning to be still before Him and listening to His voice. The growth and progression of God’s kingdom is dependent upon the growth and maturity of God’s children. We cannot stand against the evil powers in this present world, nor advance the kingdom of God, if we are not equipped with God’s spiritual armor and artillery. When we entered into a relationship with Holy God we were excepted into the ranks of a holy war, and we are now being called to take up our positions on the battlefield as soldiers of the cross!

***“If anyone would come after Me,
he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me.
For whoever wants to save his life will lose it,
but whoever loses his life for Me will find it.”
(Matthew 16:24-25)***

In yesterday’s devotional time we talked about God’s purposes for allowing suffering. Today, we are faced with the price that is necessary to be paid if we are to be called a disciple of Jesus Christ. The reality of the Christian walk is that it is a walk; our good Shepherd does not sit us down in the field and merely teach us with books, He takes us out into the classroom of life and allows us to experience His love, mercy, grace, peace, compassion, joy, heartache, and victory. Jesus paid the price to redeem us from the world so that we would become yielded to Him. His purpose is for us to find ourselves in Him, not to find ourselves in the world. He wants us to be separated from the world and surrendered to Him. By “denying self” we give ourselves wholly to Christ for His holy purposes which were originally achieved through suffering and sacrifice and death. To be called His disciples we must be willing to walk the same sacred path.

To lose ourselves in Christ is an act of the will, an act of devotion towards the Lord. Do not confuse “denying self” with “self-denial”; the former is about being identified with Christ, the latter is solely giving something up for a good purpose. We are called to surrender to Christ in obedience to His will, and then daily count the cost as we “die to ourselves” and take up the cross and follow Him. When we take up the cross we are not being called to carry our burdens, on the contrary, we willingly lay down all thoughts of ourselves and concern for our circumstances, to carry the higher standard and banner of the cross of Christ that His kingdom purposes will prevail. Beloved, if we aren’t willing to bear the cross we can’t wear the crown! May we not waste the life that was bought for us with the priceless and precious blood of Jesus Christ, but be willing to lay down all concern for ourselves in this present life and surrender ourselves fully under the cross of Christ that He might be lifted up and glorified!

“Whoever serves Me must follow Me;

***and where I am, My servant also will be.
My Father will honor the one who serves Me.”
(John 12:26)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:5

Our loving and ever-devoted Shepherd has called us to Himself to experience a full and abundantly fruitful life with Him if we are willing to yield ourselves to Him. Each day He spreads a sumptuous banqueting table before us and calls us to sit and feast with Him. He woos us to Himself like a loving Bridegroom longing to spend intimate time with his Bride. He is jealous to spend time with us each day; but too often we find reason to wander off and waste our day away on things and activities that have no kingdom building value.

***“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.”
(Psalm 23:5)***

The Lord has achieved victory for us by going to the cross and calls us to walk closely with Him, and dependent upon Him, so we will experience all the joys that His suffering and shame bought. He has poured out His cup of blessings and salvation upon us and calls us to drink deeply from His well that will never run dry. May we worship Him with gratitude for the victory that we have in Christ, and may we commit to being more intentional about the time we spend with Him, so we can learn to discern His voice, and walk triumphantly carrying the banner of His cross high. Lift up praise to the Lord that He considered our lives worthy of saving and leading, and may our life so reflect the life of Christ that others will find in us a life worthy of following (reference Philipians 3:17)

***“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,
so that you may know Him better.”
(Ephesians 1:17)***

***Heavenly Father,
“I want to know Christ and the power of His***

resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

(Philippians 3:10-11)

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.

The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

(Galatians 2:20)

“I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

(Philippians 1:20-21)

Be exalted in my life Lord.

Be glorified I pray.

In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

Day 28:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 10:28-30

Our good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, laid down His life for the sheep. He gave up everything that we might gain everything. There are times in our walk, however, that we waiver in our devotion towards our loving Lord and we wander from His tender loving care. Sheep are prone to wander (after all, they are defenseless, stupid animals that are inclined to get into trouble – it is no wonder we are called sheep!), but a responsible shepherd will take whatever measures are necessary to retrieve that lost sheep; not only because of it’s worth to him and the master who has entrusted them to his care, but for the sake of the shepherd’s name and reputation, who did not want to appear negligent in his care. Once we have entered the flock of our good Shepherd, He will not let us out from under His watchful care. ***“If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off?...In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost”*** (Matthew 18:12, 14).

***“I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish;
no one can snatch them out of My hand.***

***My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all;
no one can snatch them out of My Father’s hand.***

I and the Father are one.”

(John 10:28-29)

Jesus Christ came into the world to ***“seek and to save what was lost”*** (Luke 19:10). His purpose in coming was to bring salvation (“eternal life”) to lost sinners. ***“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” (John 3:16). His divine purpose was to provide all who would believe in Him an eternal, lasting life of living fellowship with Him and the Father. **“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent”** (John 17:3). This blessed life of fellowship with God is given as a gift to all who will believe and is meant to be enjoyed both now and forevermore.

***“And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life,
and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life,
he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”
(1 John 5:11)***

God’s will and intention for mankind is life. When given the option to eat from any tree in the Garden of Eden, except for the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (being forewarned that they would die if they did eat of it!), man ignored God’s warning and chose death; even though he had been given complete access to the tree of life which was dripping with abundant fruit right next to the tree which brings death (reference Genesis 2:9, 16-17). **“...I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the LORD is your life...”** (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). Today, our access to the tree of life is only available through Jesus Christ, who is our life (reference Revelation 22:14)! Jesus came to restore the perfect union and fellowship with God that existed before sin entered the world. Sin, which always leads to death, keeps us from the eternal life that God has purposed for us. Eternal life is Christ’s gift to us; it is a gift of God’s grace received through faith in Jesus Christ (reference Ephesians 2:8); it cannot be achieved any other way. **“Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you”** (John 6:27). Jesus is our Source of life. He came down from heaven to give us His life that we might have life, now, and for all eternity. Everything that is opposed to Him leads to death. Therefore, let us stop wandering in this immoral and corrupt world that wants to rob us of our life, and start surrendering our lives into the capable and caring hands of the One who alone will lead us to experience His abundant and eternal life. It has been said that “prayer is to the spiritual life what breathing is to the physical life – if you stop breathing you will die.” Our life is dependent upon Jesus Christ; therefore, let us make every effort to spend intimate time with our Lord in prayer each day so we may have the spiritual breath we need to live and to use to resuscitate another spiritually dead soul!

***“You have made known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in Your presence,
with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”
(Psalm 16:11)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 25:31-46

Our good Shepherd came to bring us life. Sadly, however there will be many who will reject His offer of eternal life and remain in their spiritually dead state. ***“Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life”*** (Matthew 25:46). Anyone who rejects the Lord’s offer of life, and instead follows the devil down the pathway which leads to death, will end up in the place that God has reserved for the devil and his angels (reference Revelation 20:10). ***“Then He will say to those on His left ‘Depart from Me, you who are cursed into the eternal fire prepare for the devil and his angels’”*** (Matthew 25:41).

Satan has been perpetuating the same deadly lie to deceive and destroy man since the Garden of Eden, and will continue to do so until the end when he will finally be destroyed by the Lord. ***“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work; but the one who holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of His mouth and destroy by the splendor of His coming”*** (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8). There will be a judgment for both the righteous and the wicked (reference Acts 24:15). ***“Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned”*** (John 5:29).

“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself. And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man. Those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”
(John 5:24-27, 29)

How vital it is that we remain connected to our Source of life, lest we be tempted away by the enemy of God who wants to steal the breath of God from us and leave us in a comatose state, unable to share God’s message of life with others. God wants to use us as an instrument of righteousness to bring His salvation to others. May we experience His spiritual breath now through prayer and become spiritually nourished through His Word so we will be strengthened to breathe His life-giving truth into the lives of the spiritually dead in this world. May they be resurrected from their spiritually dead state now, while there is still time. ***“Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”*** (1 Timothy 4:16).

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 23:6

If there is anything we have learned as we have walked these past seven days with our “good Shepherd,” it is this: *He is good!* We know and worship the God of “unfailing love, kindness, and mercy.” The final verse of the beloved “Shepherd Psalm” declares that His ***“goodness and love***

will follow me all the days of my life. The word “follow” in this verse, literally means to “pursue”. Our good Shepherd pursues us with a Jealous love. He is a jealous God who wants our complete devotion, and He will not put up with any competing affections in our life; we were made for Him alone and for no one else. He longs to shower His children with every good and perfect gift, much like any loving earthly father would, but because He is God, His goodness far exceeds anything we could every hope or imagine (reference Ephesians 3:20). ***“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows”*** (James 1:17). Even His discipline in our lives is good: ***“...God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness”*** (Hebrews 12:10). Everything He pours out into our lives is for our benefit; to bring us His goodness and to bring Him all glory!

***“Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”
(Psalm 23:6)***

Our good Shepherd is leading us through this life and towards our heavenly home. One day we will look back on our life and see only His “goodness and love” and we will fall down and worship Him. We will understand all that He has allowed and accomplished in our lives was with purpose and was perfectly planned to show us His goodness and to glorify His name. ***“In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling” (Exodus 15:13)***. Beloved, He is so good to us. Sometimes (if not most of the time!) we act like spoiled children who do not appreciate all the kindness and goodness our loving and devoted Father pours into our lives. We question and complain to Him rather than take the time to be still to listen and to worship Him. May we ask our Heavenly Father to forgive us for taking for granted His benevolent love and affection in our lives; for all the times we have resisted His discipline and run from His merciful and compassionate arms; and for wasting our devotion and affection on anything other than Him. This evening run back into His loving arms and rest in the embrace of the One who will not harm you but will shower you with His goodness and grace. He never fails to gives us the best of Himself, He deserves our devotion and worship. Lift up your head and fix your eyes on Jesus and worship the Lord – for He alone is worthy!

***“Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne;
love and faithfulness go before You.
Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim You,
who walk in the light of Your presence, O LORD.
They rejoice in Your name all day long;
they exult in Your righteousness.
For You are their glory and strength,
and by Your favor You exalt our horn.”
(Psalm 89:14-17)***

***Heavenly Father,
“How great You are, O Sovereign LORD!
There is no one like You, and there is no God but You.***

**O Sovereign LORD, You are God!
Your words are trustworthy, and You have promised
these good things to Your servant.
Now be pleased to bless the house of Your servant,
that it may continue forever in Your sight;
for You, O Sovereign LORD, have spoken,
and with Your blessing the house of Your
servant will be blessed forever.”**

(2 Samuel 7:22, 28-29)

**“Enter His gates with thanksgiving and His courts with praise;
give thanks to Him and praise His name.
For the LORD is good and His love endures forever;
His faithfulness continues through all generations.”**

(Psalm 100:4-5)

“The LORD is good to all;

He has compassion on all He has made.

All You have made will praise you, O LORD;

Your saints will extol You.

**They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom and speak of Your might,
so that all men may know of Your mighty acts
and the glorious splendor of Your kingdom.**

**Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom,
and Your dominion endures through all generations.**

**The LORD is faithful to all His promises
and loving toward all He has made.”**

(Psalm 145:9-13)

“To [You] belongs eternal praise”

(Psalm 111:10)

**“I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
I will glorify Your name forever.”**

(Psalm 86:12)

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Day 29:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 11:1-16

Up to this point in our journey we have walked with Jesus as He has revealed to us that He has the life that we need. As the “Bread of Life”, He is our Provision to nourish, sustain, and strengthen us with the portion He has provided for us; as the “Light of the world”, He is our Presence to guide us as we walk the path He has prepared for us; as the “Gate for the sheep”, He is our Protection to keep us safe and secure in the pasture He has presented to us; and as the “Good Shepherd”, He is our Peace to lead us to the eternal life He has promised us. Now, as we begin to make our way through the final portions of our journey we discover a shift in the Lord’s teachings. The subject matter moves from life to death as Jesus, Himself, moves to the

final leg of His earthly ministry to fulfill the reason for His coming. The abundant life that He has promised us would come through the fulfillment of the work He was sent to do. Our life would come through His death. ***“The last enemy to be destroyed is death”*** (1 Corinthians 15:26).

In our Scripture reading this morning Jesus began to prepare His disciples for His ultimate glorification, by providing them a glimpse of what was soon to come, as He allowed one of His beloved friends to experience death. ***“This sickness will not end in death. No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it”*** (John 11:4). The Lord reveals His power over death and receives glory through death. The disciples had already seen Jesus raise people from the dead, and they knew that He only had to give His word to accomplish it (reference John 4:50-53). When Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus’ was sick they believed He could heal their brother with just a word. Jesus sent word back to them telling them that his sickness would not end in death, but His word was little comfort to them being that Lazarus had already died.

***“Lazarus is dead, and for your sake
I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe.”
(John 11:14, 15)***

With all we know about God – His provision, His presence, His protection, His peace – it is a wonder how quickly we falter in our faith when faced with the first sign of suffering or trial. We question God’s love for us when He allows us to face problems and pain in this life, when we know from His Word that He has all the power to deliver us. We question God and wonder why He would allow this in our life, rather than trusting Him and wondering with reverence and awe that He would choose to allow this in our life. Jesus gives us His Word so that we will believe Him and trust Him no matter how difficult our circumstances may be, no matter how discouraging the trials we face, no matter how defeated we may feel. His purpose in our pain is to reveal His power and build our faith. ***“I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength”*** (Philippians 4:12b, 13).

We may not always understand when God delays His answer, but we can trust His answer will come at the appointed time and trust that He has a divine purpose in everything He does. We can trust that He is working all things out for our good and His glory. ***“The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance”*** (2 Peter 3:9). The Lord wants to perfect our faith, and we know from His Word that ***“[His] power is made perfect in weakness”*** (2 Corinthians 12:9). Throughout the Scriptures we see God’s glory revealed through human weakness, and there is no better, nor more powerful, example of this than that of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. These next seven days of our journey, the Lord will open our eyes to a renewed vision of the glory of God as we tap into the resurrection power of Jesus Christ and find our strength in the “central affirmation” of our Christian faith. This morning, if you are questioning the length of the fiery trial you are walking through, or growing weary from the pain that you have been subjected to, lift up your eyes to the One who is holding you and find in Him all the strength you need to persevere. He will not let go until He has accomplished all that He has purposed in your life. Hold fast to Him and don’t let go; He has promised that His glory will be revealed – and you don’t want to miss it!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Romans 9:14-29

The Lord allowed Mary and Martha to suffer the disappointment and grief of Lazarus death for a brief time so that they would experience His glory and power at the appointed time. His glorification, not our consolation, is His goal. Suffering is a side of God's love that may be difficult to comprehend and grasp, but it is a necessary part of His kingdom plan. ***“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed”*** (1 Peter 4:12-13).

God allows suffering in our lives as an opportunity to reveal His glory and power. God's glory and His power are closely associated in the Scriptures. ***“They will tell of the glory of Your kingdom and speak of Your might”*** (Psalm 145:11). God's power is a manifestation of His glory; a good example of this is found in the Exodus: ***“And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them. But I will gain glory for Myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the Lord”*** (Exodus 14:4). God, in His divine Sovereignty, raised up Pharaoh, that through Him He would reveal His glory and power.

***“ ‘I raised you up for this very purpose,
that I might display My power in you
and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth.’
Therefore God has mercy on whom He wants to have mercy,
and He hardens whom He wants to harden.”
(Romans 9:17-18)***

God allows us to be active participants in His power and glory as He accomplishes His work in the world. We can be confident that He is working on our behalf to reveal His glory and might just as He did at the Red Sea (reference Exodus 14:21-28). ***“The LORD will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior He will strip up His zeal; with a shout He will raise the battle cry and will triumph over His enemies”*** (Isaiah 42:13). Our God is the God of the living, not the dead; He went to the grave to deliver us from death unto life and is working even today to see that we experience the fullness of that glorious life that He purchased on our behalf. May we be ***“strengthened with all power according to His glorious might”*** (Colossians 1:11a) as we persevere through the trials and difficulties of this life so that His name will be exalted and His glory will be revealed. The Lord has given us the Spirit of divine might and power to give us the endurance and patience we need to walk victoriously, and with great joy, through this life. Tap into His unlimited strength and power today and pray that He would use you to reveal His glory and might to another weary warrior who needs encouragement today. Praise Him for the people He has placed in your path who pray so faithfully for you each day. Use the strength that you receive to fervently and continuously pray for all the saints today (reference Ephesians 6:18)!

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 145

One of the greatest ways to display God’s power and strength in our lives is through praise. We desire so much for God’s mighty hand to ease our suffering, but until He does, we can rest secure in the knowledge of His Word that His hand is holding us close and lifting us up. ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you”*** (Hebrews 13:5b). We bring honor to God when we offer Him praise and thanksgiving in the midst of life’s trials and storms. The promises of His Word should be enough to sustain us during our most difficult moments in life. The Lord wants us to see His glory and speak about the wonderful ways He has revealed His power in and through our lives.

***“One generation will commend Your works to another;
they will tell of Your mighty acts.
They will speak of the glorious splendor of Your majesty,
and I will meditate on Your wonderful works.
They will tell of the power of Your awesome works,
and I will proclaim Your great deeds.”
(Psalm 145:4-6)***

This evening offer up Psalm 145 as your own song of praise as you reflect on all the ways God has revealed His glory and power in your life through some of your most challenging trials and disappointments. Take time to recount His faithfulness as you learned to wait on His answer. Offer Him praise for using that trial to lead you to a place of deeper understanding and trust in Him, for taking that time to develop a deeper devotion to Him, and for helping you to discover a renewed intimacy with Him. As one song so beautiful states: *“What if trials in this life are Your mercies in disguise.”* Trust God for His higher and holy purposes in your life as He leads you through the garbage to the glory waiting on the other side. Click [here](#) to listen as you worship to Laura Story’s *“Blessings”*.

***“The LORD is near to all who call on Him,
to all who call on Him in truth.
He fulfills the desires of those who fear Him;
He hears their cry and save them.
The LORD watches over all who love Him,
but all the wicked He will destroy.
My mouth will speak in praise of the LORD.
Let every creature praise His holy name for ever and ever.”
(Psalm 145:18-21)***

***Heavenly Father,
“Praise be to You, O LORD,
God of our father Israel,
from everlasting to everlasting.
Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power
and the glory and the majesty and the splendor,***

***for everything in heaven and earth is Yours.
Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom:
You are exalted as head over all.
Wealth and honor come from You;
You are the ruler of all things.
In Your hands are strength and power
to exalt and give strength to all.
Now, our God, we give You thanks,
and praise Your glorious name.”
(1 Chronicles 20:10-13)
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.***

Day 30:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 11:17-37

Jesus waited four days before going to Judea. When He finally arrived in Bethany, Martha went immediately to Him. ***“If You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask”*** (John 11:21-22). Martha, the sister who had been so busy serving that she missed out on sitting in the presence of God, now in the midst of great pain and sorrow sought Him out, “the one that is needed” (reference Luke 10:42), expressing her disappointment, while at the same time exhibiting great faith that Jesus was who He said He was.

***“I am the resurrection and the life.
He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies;
and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die.
Do you believe this?”
(John 11:25-26)***

Beloved, how those questioning words of Martha, that were later repeated by Mary (v.32), resonate with so many of us who have prayed and waited on God to bring an answer only to have watched our hopes and dreams die right before our eyes because we didn’t get the answer that we prayed for. How many of us have agonized over why God would allow us to face death (death of a loved one, death of a dream, death of a relationship) when we know that He holds the power of life in His hands? God’s delays are never meant to bring disappointment, rather they are meant to develop in us a greater faith. The Lord’s question to Martha cuts deep into our hearts: ***“Do you believe this?”*** Do we truly believe that God is who He says He is? Do we believe He has the power to do what He says He can do? Do we believe that He is “the resurrection and the life”? Martha affirmed her belief that Jesus was the promised Messiah, but her faith in His ability to meet her personal needs was being greatly tested. Everyone who professes to believe in Christ will be faced with a great trial of faith at some point in their journey, because God desires for His children to have an indestructible faith – in Him!

When Mary heard that Jesus had arrived she went to Him and fell at His feet as she had always been known to do (reference Luke 10:39; John 12:3). The Lord always delighted in Mary’s

devotion and worship; when He saw her weeping He was overcome with grief. He was deeply moved by her tears, and it is here that the tenderness and love of God is revealed on a deep and personal level. ***“Jesus wept”*** (John 11:35). The shortest verse in the Bible is also the most powerful verse in the Bible. With these two words the power and passion of God collides and touches us on a deeply personal level and preaches a silent sermon that affects our hearts like nothing else ever could. In this moment, our great High Priest, becomes our sympathetic friend and our hearts connect with Him on a new and profoundly deeper level. ***“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering”*** (Isaiah 53:3a). The God who revealed His glory to Moses on the mountain of the Lord has condescended to reach down and touch us in a personal way and has shown us He is a God who sympathizes with us in every way (reference Hebrews 4:15). ***“The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness...”*** (Exodus 34:6).

Beloved, how great is His love towards us (reference Psalm 117:2a). That gaping hole in your heartbroken chest that no one else can see, those wounds that won't wear off no matter how often you plead, those scars that are a constant reminder of your humiliation and shame, and the terrible thorn that offers no hope of ever going away – Jesus sees and feels and wears all of your pain, your guilt, and your shame as a garment of flesh that has become His conquering king's robe for all eternity. Every wound, every scar, every thorn, and every heartbreak are not meant for you to wear as a badge of shame, instead they are your medal of honor as you move up of the ranks of faith. God has counted you worthy of advancing to the next level and has trusted you with the deepest place in His heart so you too can sympathize and feel His heart as He weeps over the pain of others. He has given us these painful gifts, not as a reminder of the circumstances we have faced, but as a reminder to always look to His compassionate face and trust in His constant love and endless grace. Every tear that you have shed, He has shared with you!

Jesus came to conquer death and give His life for the world; He accomplished this work through great suffering, trial, and pain. He proved through the power of the resurrection that death has no hold on Him, but that He has total power over death and the grave. Jesus is life and He offers us that life; and if we are willing to believe in Him we will never have to fear death (reference Romans 10:9). Jesus wants to put to death all our doubts, our fears, our concerns for this life and build in us a perfect faith so we can experience the fullness of His life. The choice to believe is left up to us. Are you willing to wait on the Lord to accomplish His greater purpose in your life, and in the lives of others He is using your circumstance to bless and touch? Will you trust Him to accomplish the work He intends, or will you choose to solve your own problems and find your own answers in the world rather than in His Word? Will you run from the problem because it is too much to bear, too big to solve, too much to handle, or will you run to Him believing in His promises that there is glory and a promotion waiting for you if you will trust Him to lead you through to the other side? We have so much to gain if we are willing to believe. This morning confess where you have wavered in your faith because you have grown weary of the wait, and ask the Lord to do whatever it takes to make you strong in Him again. Tomorrow we will see that there are blessings and good things in store for those who are willing to believe and wait!

“I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!”
(Mark 9:24)

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Ephesians 1:19-20

The Lord wants us to rely on the promises of His Word. When He asks us, “Do you believe?”, He is giving us an invitation to experience His mighty power. There is no greater power than that displayed in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone can raise the dead – He is the only one to hold and exhibit that power. If He has the power to raise the dead, then surely He has to power to accomplish whatever He wants to in our life. God allows us to face death so we will find faith. When our faith rests on the solid rock foundation of the resurrection of Jesus Christ we find that nothing can shake us or move us or cause us to fear!

***“...and His incomparably great power for us who believe.
That power is like the working of His mighty strength,
which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead
and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms,
far above all rule and authority, power and dominion,
and every title that can be given, not only in the present age
but also in the one to come.”
(Ephesians 1:19-21)***

Jesus has been given all authority above all rule and power (reference Colossians 2:15). It is His desire that we relinquish all control to Him; after all, we hold no power or authority or any claim on our own life – everything rests in His sovereign hands. When we receive His gift of grace by faith we share in all the power of His resurrection. The same power that raised Jesus from the dead becomes effective in our lives the moment we believe. This is an extraordinary and dynamic energy that is appropriated through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. The Spirit of divine might was given to us as a result of Christ's death and resurrection. All His power was made available to believers that we might share in the wealth of His glorious kingdom of power.

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages He might show the incomparable riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:6-7).

Every day we are faced with circumstances that will cause us to question the power that God has deposited in our lives. It is the enemy's greatest desire to rob us of our spiritual power in Christ Jesus. The devil accomplishes this by causing us to become discouraged, and to doubt and despair when we are faced with difficulties and challenges outside our human strength and ability. It is here that we must become intentional about putting on our spiritual armor (reference Ephesians 6:13-18) so we can ***“stand against the devil's schemes”*** clothed in all of God's resurrection power that He has deposited within us through His Holy Spirit. We have been given God's power because we can not live this life in our human power. The greatest battlefield we will face in this spiritual war that rages against our soul is in the mind. We need to put on our helmet of salvation and settle it once and for all that we have been saved and delivered and deposited with power to stand against every evil power that comes against us. ***“Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God”*** (Colossians 3:1-3). Today, don't be surprised when you are challenged in your faith, maybe even before you walk out that door. Remember the battle that we face is not “flesh and blood,” it is a spiritual battle that requires spiritual power. Put on your armor and walk without fear clothed in God's power, trusting that whatever comes against you today to try to rob you of your faith, God is using to build it firmer still!

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 24

Our conquering Savior is seated on the throne in heaven and is interceding on our behalf. He shares in all of our sufferings, our sorrows, and our pains. He feels every bit of our heartache because He has walked in our shoes, worn our flesh, and bore all our sin and shame. He conquered our greatest enemy – death – and has crushed every foe that has stood in the path of our receiving life in Him. Because we have believed we are now clothed in the mighty power of His resurrection and we have all that we need to live in victory. ***“No weapon forged against you will prevail and you will refute every tongue that accuses you”*** (Isaiah 54:17). We are no longer powerless, but have been given all the power of God, who raises the dead, at our disposal. May we use this abundant wealth for the advancement of the kingdom of God and not waste our resources warring in the flesh and giving over to carnal desires. The battle we face is not meant to be flesh and blood; there is a very real spiritual battle that is waging against our faith. May we put on our armor and stand firm in our faith. God will put to death everything in our life that is not of Him and resurrect in us a powerful and abundant life that will bring Him glory. Ask the Lord to remove all your doubt and fears and honor Him with perfect faith as you use the wealth of His mighty power to worship Him today and every day! To God be the glory!

***“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it,
the world, and all who live in it;
for He founded it upon the seas
and established it upon the waters.
Who may ascend the hill of the LORD?
Who may stand in His holy place?
He who has clean hands and a pure heart,
who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false.
He will receive blessing from the LORD
and vindication from God his Savior.
Such is the generation of those who seek Him,
who seek Your face, O God of Jacob.
Lift up your heads, O you gates;
be lifted up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty,
the LORD mighty in battle.
Lift up your heads, O you gates;
lift them up, you ancient doors,
that the King of glory may come in.
Who is He, this King of glory?
The LORD Almighty – He is the King of glory.”
(Psalm 24)***

Heavenly Father,
"I want to know Christ and the power of His
resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings,
becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow,
to attain to the resurrection from the dead."
(Philippians 3:10-11)
"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me.
The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave Himself for me."
(Galatians 2:20)
"May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord
Jesus Christ, through which the world has been
crucified to me, and I to the world."
(Galatians 6:14)
"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power,
for ever and ever!"
In Jesus' Name. Amen.

Day 31:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 11:38-44

God allows suffering in our lives to reveal His higher purposes and His greater glory. Each new trial that we face in our lives (and we will most assuredly have them) is another opportunity for further growth in our walk of faith. ***"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen"*** (2 Corinthians 4:18a). Jesus showed up in Bethany four days later, after Lazarus was already dead and after he had been buried far too long for there to be any possibility that anyone would believe he could be resurrected, because He wanted to open their eyes to see the wonder and power of God like they have never known possible. He wanted to take them to a new level of faith, which would carry them through when He Himself would face the cross and die and ultimately be resurrected and glorified.

God alone is the giver of life, and only God alone can raise the dead. With this miracle Jesus would submit the final piece of evidence to prove that He was indeed the Son of God sent into the world. He knew that when He began His journey back to Judea He would be initiating the events that would take Him all the way to the cross and to the fulfillment of the work He came to do. Jesus wanted to instill in His followers a solid rock foundation of faith that would become the bedrock truth of Christianity (reference 1 Corinthians 15:14, 17). ***"If you confess***

with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9).

When Jesus first was born into the world, Mary and Joseph brought Him into the temple to be circumcised. There, a devout, and righteous man named Simeon spoke to them, saying, **“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed”** (Luke 2:34, 35a). Jesus Christ would be the foundation that the future church would be built upon (reference 1 Corinthians 3:11); a solid rock foundation that would become to some a highway leading into the presence and power of God, and to others, a stumbling block over which they would fall (reference 1 Peter 2:7,8). **“See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in Him will never be put to shame”** (1 Peter 2:6).

**“ ‘See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua.
There are seven eyes on that one stone,
and I will engrave an inscription on it,’
says the LORD Almighty, ‘and I will remove the sin
of this land in a single day.’ “
(Zechariah 3:9)**

Jesus stood in the presence of the people and commanded the stone be rolled away, **“Take away the stone”** (John 11:39a). He was about to remove the veil from their eyes, but Martha had to interject one more time. **“But, Lord...by this time there is a bad odor...”** (v.39b). If only she would look through the eyes of faith the Lord was trying to develop in her she would have expected that what Jesus offers us is the fragrance of a costly and sweet perfume. **“For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life”** (2 Corinthians 2:15-16). Jesus had come to once and for all put to death that horrible stench that was polluting our life; but we have become so accustomed to the smell that we have become desensitized to the death and corruption around us. Jesus wants to open our eyes to a renewed vision of the glory of God.

**“Did I not tell you that if you believed,
you would see the glory of God?”
(John 11:40)**

Beloved, when we filter all the trials of this life through the lense of human understanding we find ourselves lost in a sea of despair, but when we allow God to open our eyes through the pain of affliction and suffering and prick and cultivate our hearts so the promises and truths of His Word can be planted deep within, we find ourselves overwhelmed with awe and wonderment of the glory of God. O, how He wants to astound us with wonder upon wonder if we would only let Him (reference Isaiah 29:14)! This morning, pray for greater discernment to see past your present circumstances into the purposes of God who is using this time to build your faith and astound you with His glory. Praise Him that He considers you worthy of His private tutoring to lead you to that secret place close to His heart.

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Matthew 12:39-42

The Jews required a sign from Jesus as proof that He was the Messiah. Their request only substantiated their unbelief. ***“A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given except for the sign of the prophet Jonah”*** (Matthew 12:39). No amount of miraculous signs would convince them when they refused to believe their own Scriptures which had already given them all the evidence they needed and were speaking volumes about the One who was right in front of them.

“For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will stand up at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and now one greater than Jonah is here.”
(Matthew 12:40-41)

The nation was guilty of spiritual adultery and Jesus was standing before them calling them back to God. ***“Return, faithless people,’ declares the LORD, ‘for I am your husband”*** (Jeremiah 3:14a). They had their religious system, but they had no relationship with the Lord. Jesus was giving them a personal invitation to experience a relationship with the living God; He presented them the sign of Jonah, but instead of repenting, they rejected Him. The prophet Jonah suffered a “type” of death, burial, and resurrection in the belly of a great fish under the water, and the people of Nineveh accepted his message and repented for fear of God’s judgment. The cross of Jesus Christ would be God’s judgment on the world, but instead of incurring God’s wrath as Nineveh was in danger of, the world would experience God’s love in the form of His greatest sacrifice. The Jewish leaders remained in their unbelief even after Jesus died and Nineveh stands as their witness for the judgment to come.

“...but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.” “
(Romans 9:31-32)

Jesus stood before the religious leaders, as *“one greater than Solomon,”* and *“one greater than Jonah.”* The Son of God was in their midst and they rejected Him and His message. ***“The LORD Almighty is the One you are to regard as holy, He is the One you are to fear, He is the One you are to dread, and He will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel He will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall”*** (Isaiah 8:13, 14a). Jesus our “cornerstone” had indeed become their “stumbling stone;” and the stone that was rolled away to set our resurrected Lord free, would represent the stone that sealed their hardened hearts because they refused to believe. This afternoon, as you savor the morsels of His Word He has placed on your lunch plate, take time to thank the Lord for the extraordinary blessing you have been given to have in your possession a personal copy of the Word of God. Every single page is a precious testimony of trial and triumph that God used to roll the stone away from your own heart. Praise Him that He has counted you a worthy recipient of His mercy and grace and revealed Himself to you in a personal way. May we commit to honor Him each and every day by taking advantage of the time we have left to prepare for His return by studying His Word, praying without ceasing, and reaching out to the lost.

“The days are coming,’ declares the Sovereign LORD, ‘when I will send a famine through the land – not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the LORD. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from north to east, searching for the word of the LORD, but they will not find it.”

(Amos 8:11)

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 16

“The Lord is my light and my salvation...the LORD is the strength of my life” (Psalm 27:1). We can have perfect confidence in God that He is who He says He is and that He has power to do what He says He will do. He is the Source of everything good, and He has given us His life and power so we can keep that vital connection undisturbed and unhindered so we can experience daily His goodness and grace in our lives. ***“...apart from You I have no good thing”*** (Psalm 16:2). The Lord has given us the powerful presence of His Holy Spirit of might to counsel us and guide us down the path that leads to life; and though that path may be paved with pain and suffering, we know that when we finally come to the end of ourselves and lay down our lives at the foot of the cross we will experience His resurrection power and receive eternal life. May we rest in the mighty power of His righteous right hand and surrender ourselves to His constant care so we can experience all the good things that only God can give us. It is a privilege to be accepted and loved by the One who is the Giver of life and every good and perfect gift. May our perfect faith and trust in Him, as well as the way we live our lives, bring honor and glory to Him. Lift up a prayer of praise to the Author and Perfecter of your faith, thanking Him for being your source of strength to guide you victoriously through this life to the appointed finish line.

***“I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;
even at night my heart instructs me.
I have set the LORD always before me.
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because You will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will You let Your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in Your presence,
with eternal pleasures at Your right hand.”
(Psalm 16:7-11)***

Heavenly Father,
 "Give thanks to the LORD,
 call on His name;
 make known among the nations what He has done,
 and proclaim that His name is exalted.
 Sing to the LORD,
 for He has done glorious things;
 let this be known to all the world.
 Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion,
 for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."
 (Isaiah 12:4-6)
 "Yet I am always with You;
 You hold me with Your counsel,
 and afterward You take me to glory.
 Whom have I in heaven but You?
 And earth has nothing I desire besides You.
 My flesh and my heart may fail,
 but God is the strength of my heart
 and my portion forever.
 Those who are far from You will perish;
 You destroy all who are unfaithful to You.
 But as for me, it is good to be near God.
 I have made the Sovereign LORD my refuge;
 I will tell of all Your deeds."
 (Psalm 73:23-28)
 "Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel,
 who alone does marvelous deeds.
 Praise be His glorious name forever;
 may the whole earth be filled with His glory.
 Amen and Amen."
 (Psalm 72:18-19)
 In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.

Day 32:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 20:1-18

As Martha, Mary, and all the others looked on, Jesus commanded the stone to be rolled away from Lazarus' grave, and **"the dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face"** (John 11:44a). Then Jesus commanded that his grave clothes be removed so he could walk freely in the life he had just received. The stone in front of Lazarus' grave was stumbling block to Martha's faith, but once removed, she was confronted with the power and glory of God, and her faith increased. In the not too distant future, the stone would present another test of faith, as the women who went to anoint Jesus' body, after His crucifixion,

would find that the stone had already been rolled away. The stone that would “*cause men to stumble*,” would cause the women, and disciple’s, faith to falter.

On the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, and some of the other women, went to the tomb of Jesus’ and found the stone rolled away. Mary concluded that Jesus’ body had been stolen and immediately went and told the disciples. When Peter and John arrived at the tomb they found it empty just as they had been told. But Mary was not the first one to tell the, they did not remember that Jesus was the one who had told them to expect this (reference Matthew 12:40; Luke 24:46; John 2:19). Mary returned to the tomb and stood outside weeping; overcome by grief for the one she loved so much. As she peaked in to see the place where Jesus’ body once laid she saw two angels sitting at the foot and head (not unlike the cherubim that sit on the mercy seat in the most holy place). The grave clothes, that once bound Jesus’ body, were still in tact, as if to send the message that as Jesus is no longer bound to the grave, we, also, are no longer bound by sin and death; we have been set free! The tomb is now empty, but the message that is now proclaimed is not!

“He has risen!”
(Mark 16:6b)

He has risen, indeed! Mary turned from the empty tomb to find her Lord standing before her. ***“Why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?”*** (John 20:15a). How is it, when we face the trials of this life, we seem to immediately believe that God has left us, even when His Word promises us He never will (reference Matthew 28:20b; Hebrews 13:5b)? Jesus wants us to know Him, but He also wants us to see Him; not just for what He has done for us personally, but for who He is to us personally. He allows us to experience those moments of desperation so He can show us His tender, personal care – so we can know that He is not only out there, somewhere, but that He really is there for us. Jesus’ appearance to Mary that Sunday morning was a compassionate reminder that, while He came to die for the sins of the whole world, He is still a personal, intimate Lord who is interested in reaching one heart at a time; He wants a personal, living relationship with each of His children. Too often, in the agony of our pain and grief, we miss hearing the voice of our Lord speaking to us. He is right there with us. When Mary realized He was there, and recognized her Lord, she fell down and worshiped Him. Her sorrow had been turned to joy. ***“...weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning”*** (Psalm 30:5b).

The open tomb, opened heaven for us! Jesus came down from heaven to bring us life, and by laying down His life He opened the gate for us to receive His very life. The life we now live is the resurrected life! ***“In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus”*** (Romans 6:11). The life we now live, we live in Christ. We are now, and forever, intimately connected to our Lord and the wealth of heaven’s resources is our supply. We are no longer empty, we are filled with the fullness of His life! We have no reason to grieve, and wail, and mourn, because we are no longer bound to the grave. We have been saved from sin and death and given new life – and not just any life – the life of Christ! If there be any mourning or crying to do it should be for those who have not yet come face to face with the Lord and received His extraordinary and eternal life. This morning, as we pray for the lost, let us also ask God to develop His resurrection life more fully in us so we can become bold ambassadors of the most extraordinary message the world is (literally) dying to know!

***“But because of His great love for us, God,
who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ
even when we were dead in transgressions –
it is by grace you have been saved.”***
(Ephesians 2:4-5)

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-7

Our relationship with Christ began as a result of the power of His resurrection. We have been raised to a new life in Christ. This new life is lived day by day with and by the power of God; it cannot be lived any other way. We once were spiritually dead in our trespasses and sin, but because of Christ's atoning work on the cross, we have died and have been raised to experience new life with Him. ***“When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ”*** (Colossians 2:13a).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the fundamental truth of the gospel message. Without this truth we have no message. The Christian life is a resurrected life! We have been made alive in Christ by the power of God. The Lord wants us to experience this power, daily, as we live out the Christian life. All the power that was exerted to raise Jesus Christ from the dead is available to us today as we live and walk in Him (reference Ephesians 1:19-20). The resurrection of Christ opened the door for us to experience a vital and necessary connection to the Lord that was impossible to attain otherwise. It is this relationship that the apostle Paul considered to be the most excellent and worthy goal of his life. ***“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him...I want to know Christ and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead”*** (Philippians 3:7-8, 10-11).

The Lord appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus and personally invited him into a living relationship with the resurrected Lord (reference Acts 9:3-6). ***“...and last of all He appeared to me also”*** (1 Corinthians 15:8). The Lord's appearances to various people at various times after His resurrection substantiated that He is indeed risen from the dead and gave His followers the confidence and courage they need not be afraid, but to carry His message to the spiritually dead that they too might be saved. Without the resurrection of Jesus Christ we have no message to proclaim. Without a risen Savior we are all still dead in our sins with no hope of eternal life. The message of the cross is the most important message we are called to proclaim, and as followers of Jesus Christ we must not forget or forsake these truths that opened the door for each of us to be saved. May we not get so lost in the work of serving that we neglect the lost who are in need of saving!

***“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance:
that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,
that He was buried, and He was raised on the third day
according to the Scriptures...”
(1 Corinthians 15:3-4)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 45

What a glorious privilege it is indeed to know personally the Savior of the world. Can you remember the day He revealed Himself to you; when, you, like Mary and Paul, saw the risen Lord for the first time? Can you remember how your eyes were opened to see the Lord in all His glory, and being confronted by your own sin and unworthiness, falling on your face in worship? I remember running down the aisle and falling on my face in a pool of tears because I had been confronted with the risen Lord in church on a Sunday morning as a teenager. He had made Himself known to me personally and I could barely wait until the invitation was given to run and fall down and empty myself before Him and worship Him. The memory of it has me in tears as I write this now. How extraordinary and humbling it is that the Lord would make a personal appearance and extend a personal invitation for me to experience the resurrected life with Him. The tender, compassionate, and personal way He extends His grace and love to us individually is beyond comprehension. He deserves so much more than we give Him every day. How convicted we should be to waste a moment of our day on anything that does not honor and glorify His name.

As the redeemed of the Lord we need to get a firm hold on the glorious fact that Jesus Christ is alive, and begin to live our lives every day in the power of His resurrected life. He has poured so much blessing and power into our lives and we should honor and bless Him with the witness and testimony of our lives. We see Him now as the resurrected, exalted, King of glory, and we need to honor Him as such. This evening, go back to the place where you first met your Lord and offer Him the worship and praise that is worthy of His name for that divine encounter which transformed your life for all eternity. Confess where you have been living your life in recent years relying on your own meager resources instead of the endless supply of His mighty power He provided for you through His resurrection. Return to your First Love (reference Revelation 2:4-5) today with wholehearted devotion and worship Him with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength!

***“My heart is stirred by a noble theme
as I recite my verses for the king;
my tongue is the pen of a skillful writer.
You are the most excellent of men
and Your lips have been anointed with grace,
since God has blessed You forever.
Gird Your sword upon your side, O mighty one;
clothe Yourself with splendor and majesty.
In Your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth,
humility and righteousness; let Your right hand display awesome deeds.
I will perpetuate Your memory through all generations;
therefore the nations will praise You for ever and ever.”
(Psalm 45:1-4, 17)***

*Heavenly Father,
"The LORD is my light and my salvation...
the LORD is the stronghold of my life..."
(Psalm 27:1)
How do I even begin to express my gratitude
for all that You have done in my life.
That You considered my life worthy of saving
solely because You desired to have me all to Yourself.
Truly You see something that I cannot see in myself.
But with Your eyes I now know that You see in me
the life of Yourself You have given to me.
I want Your life in me to be all that anyone can see.
May I become less that you may become all of me.
There is no greater pursuit I have in my life
than to lose everything else that I may gain You!
Lead me to experience daily the fullness and might
of Your resurrection power that I may be a powerful
witness of Your glory, grace, and love in the lives
of others You desire to reach.
Be glorified in my life, I pray.
"Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power
belong to our God!"
(Revelation 19:1b)
In Jesus' Mighty Name, I pray. Amen.*

Day 33:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 20:19-23

The stone had been rolled away from Jesus' tomb and He was no longer there, but the disciples were behind locked doors, hiding away in fear. It was Sunday evening, and Jesus had already appeared to several others, that glorious day of His Resurrection, now He would make a personal appearance to His disciples to calm their fears and increase their faith. Surely, His appearance in the room, when the door had not been unlocked and opened, did little to calm their fears initially, but Jesus assured them He had come in peace. **"Peace be with you!"** (v.19b). Jesus not only came in peace, He also came to give them peace. **"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid"** (John 14:27). Jesus had given them these words of assurance when He promised them the gift of the Holy Spirit, who would remind them of all that He had been teaching them.

***“And with that He breathed on them and said,
‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’ “
(John 20:22)***

Jesus appeared to the disciples to prepare them for the work they were being sent out to do. ***“As the Father has sent Me, I am sending you”*** (v.21). His work would be done in His power only; the power that His resurrection had achieved for them, and all who would come to believe in Him. His power would now be within them through the indwelling presence of God’s Holy Spirit. Jesus’ prior work of salvation was necessary in order for the Spirit’s work to be effectual. Jesus had given up His last breath and spirit as He complete the work He had been sent to do on the cross. But now He would breath His breath and Spirit into His disciples so they could begin the work they were being commissioned to do throughout the world.

***“If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven;
if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.”
(John 20:23)***

The disciples were not being given authority to forgive sins, they were only being given the authority to carry the glorious message that Jesus’ work on the cross had brought forgiveness of sins to those who would accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. ***“Who can forgive sins but God alone?”*** (Mark 2:7b). The message of the cross is a sacred and holy message that every follower of Jesus Christ must carry, and to do so with great reverence and respect for the One whose very life was given up so we could have His message deposited within us. ***“This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses to these things”*** (Luke 24:46-48). May we take seriously our commission as disciples of Jesus Christ and carry His message of hope to a world that is hiding in fear. If God were not forgiving, we would all still be hiding in fear and in our sin. Praise Him that He unlocked the door to your heart so you could receive His salvation and forgiveness of sins; and thank Him for His Holy Spirit that He has given to you to carry that message boldly to a world lost in sin. Pray for the lost and than go proclaim His message to they can be found in Him!

***“Praise 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,
and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade –
kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s
power until the coming of the salvation
that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”
(1 Peter 1:3-5)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49

Yesterday, we stood at the empty tomb with Mary and reflected on the glorious news that Jesus is, indeed, alive! Today, as we stepped back into the pages of Scripture and watched as Jesus walked through a lock door we learned that, not only is He living, but He is living in us! ***“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”*** (1 Corinthians 15:22). The Good News of the cross just keeps getting better and better. In Christ we have salvation, eternal life, and forgiveness of sin...and if that weren't enough, we have been given His Holy Spirit which indwells within!

“Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.”
(Romans 8:1-2)

The Holy Spirit of God is His life giving power that equips and enables us to carry out the work of God in this world. The Holy Spirit is the very life of Christ given to us – His resurrected life! ***“And if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you”*** (Romans 8:11). We have been set free from the shackles of the sin that bound us to this world and set on a path filled with the Spirit of God to set others free. ***“Now the Lord is Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom”*** (2 Corinthians 3:17).

When Jesus walked through that locked doorway He walked through with a new body. He was not some apparition, but had flesh and bone that the disciples could touch and with which He used to eat with them. One day we too will have a glorified body, but now we have His glory taking up residence in our bodies through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit of God. Our bodies have been given a new life at salvation and we have been transformed into God's temple. His presence dwells within us and the life we now live is not our own. We are to live and walk in the power of the Spirit we have been given and to treat our bodies as God's holy temple. We might ask ourselves everyday with everything we set our eyes, our ears, our hands, and our bodies to do, is this activity worthy of the glory of God that dwells inside of me? If what you are about to watch, or listen to, or do would offend or profane His holy name, then it is something that you ought not to do. Find a more holy, noble pursuit that will honor and glorify His holy name (reference Philippians 4:8-9). Remember, you have been saved and set apart and given His Spirit to do His work, not yours!

***“The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;
it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory;
it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;
it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”***
(1 Corinthians 15:42b-44)

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 130

Without the resurrection the message we have been given is ***“useless and so is your faith”*** (1 Corinthians 15:14). Praise God that our Lord is not in the grave, but has risen from the dead so we all can believe on His name! If not for His merciful intervention we would still be lost in our sins and be destined for death. Our salvation cost our savior His life and should not be taken lightly. As we meditate on Psalm 130 this evening may we lift up our hearts in praise to our merciful and gracious God who has provided for our greatest need. How blessed we are that we can call on Him in our time of need and know that He is always waiting to help us and forgive our sins. Take time tonight to repent of those areas of your life that are not honoring Him and praise Him that He forgives your sin and casts them into the sea (reference Micah 7:19).

***“Out of the depths, I cry to You, O LORD;
O Lord, hear my voice.
Let Your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.
If You, O LORD, kept a record of sins,
O Lord, who could stand?
But with You there is forgiveness;
therefore You are feared.
I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,
and in His word I put my hope.
My soul waits for the Lord
more than watchmen wait for the morning,
more than watchmen wait for the morning.
O Israel, put your hope in the LORD,
for with the LORD is unfailing love
and with Him is full redemption.
He Himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.”
(Psalm 130)***

***Heavenly Father,
I rejoice in You always.
Thank You that You are always near.
I praise You that I do not have to be anxious
about anything, but by prayer and petition,
and with thanksgiving, I can present my requests to You.
And You have given me the promise that the peace of God,
which transcends all understanding will guard my heart
and my mind in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:4-7).
Thank You for the indwelling presence of Your Holy Spirit
that You gave to me at the moment of my salvation.
Thank You for the Spirit's comfort and counsel
as He reminds me of the promises in Your Word.
Help me to also walk in peace as you have shown me peace
and to always be a peacemaker. Forgive me at times
for being a trouble maker. I want my life to bring glory
to Your name. No matter how intense my personal***

*pain may be, I want You to always take pleasure in
my response to the circumstances I face, knowing
that I only need to look up and see the beauty of Your face.
“You are worthy, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power.”
(Revelation 4:11a)
May my life bring You honor and glory today.
In Jesus’ mighty name, I pray. Amen.*

Day 34:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

“To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy – to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.” (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence – Read John 20:26-31

Jesus stepped down from His throne in heaven and made a personal appearance in the world so that the world might believe in Him and the One who had sent Him. His entire ministry on earth centered on making believers out of an unbelieving world of the truth that He is the Son of God who had been sent from the Father in heaven to save mankind from their sins. His message and His miracles all bore witness to this truth. With His death on the cross, and subsequent resurrection and exaltation, Jesus submitted the final pieces of evidence to prove His case that **“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”** (John 3:16).

***“The time has come,’ He said.
“The kingdom of God is near.
Repent and believe the good news.”
(Mark 1:15)***

When Jesus returned the following week to the house, where He had shown Himself in His resurrected state to the disciples, He found them still hidden behind closed doors. This time, however, Thomas, who doubted his friends’ testimony that Jesus was alive, was with them (he proved he had a little faith, for he showed up hoping for an opportunity to see the risen Lord for himself). Jesus, who’s desire it is for everyone to believe in Him, would not let His disciple waiver in His unbelief. **“Stop doubting and believe”** (John 20:27b). It was vital that His messengers, who were being sent into the world to proclaim the gospel message, believed in that message for themselves. **“And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith”** (1 Corinthians 15:14). It was not enough to know that Jesus lived, but that He continues to live today! **“...of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures...was buried...and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...”** (1 Corinthians 15:3, 4).

***“But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name.”
(John 20:31)***

It is only through believing in Christ that we can receive the life that Jesus purchased for us on the cross with His blood (reference Romans 10:9-10). When we refuse to believe in God's power (which was exhibited fully on the cross and in the resurrection of Jesus Christ) we hold the One who has been given all authority to judge between the living and the dead (reference Acts 10:42) in contempt. ***"How long will these people treat Me with contempt? How long will they refuse to believe Me, in spite of all the miraculous signs I have performed among them?"*** (Numbers 14:11). Jesus stood in the court of heaven and took the penalty for our sin when the Judge of all the earth was about to bring His gavel down upon us and condemn us to death. Through His merciful act He paid our sin debt in full and purchased for us the deed to heaven and the life that comes with it. When we reject His gracious gift, we scorn His authority and disrespect His sacrificial offer and position ourselves as an obstacle in the process of the court of heaven which has accepted His plea on our behalf. How foolish we are not to believe in Him!

"...blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."
(John 20:29b)

Jesus would not return to the Father until He was sure that His disciples all believed. He not only made an appearance to them, He also spent forty days with them, teaching them and preparing them for the work He was calling them to do. He wanted to be sure they were firm in their faith, for to carry His message would cost many of them their lives. ***"After His suffering, He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God"*** (Acts 1:3). As witnesses to His resurrection, these first messengers were being sent out to proclaim a message to a world who would not have this same privilege. But the message of the cross holds all the power, and they were simply commissioned to deliver it. ***"Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ"*** (Romans 10:17). It is no wonder that Paul, after being confronted with the resurrected Christ, made the Lord the sole pursuit of his life and message and preached no other message but Jesus Christ and Him crucified (reference 1 Corinthians 2:2).

Jesus has gone out of His way to make Himself known to each of us in a personal way. The message of life He came to deliver to us, and to give to us, cost Him His life. We should be willing to lay down our lives, and everything that we consider important in our lives right now, for the honor and the privilege of sharing this truth with others. We live in a generation that has the greatest access to the Word of God, with the greatest number of churches available for people to come and hear the Word of God and experience a divine encounter with the living resurrected Lord, but sadly, we are considered the most biblically illiterate generation. As believers, we each have a responsibility to take up our sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, and become diligent students of the Word, so that the Lord can strengthen us and prepare us to continue the work of proclaiming His Word to an unbelieving and spiritually malnourished world. May we take the time each day to confirm what we believe by spending time with the Lord in His Word and prayer, and then with confidence, go out and proclaim that glorious message of life to a lost and dying world.

***"How, then, can they call on the One they have not believed in?
And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?
And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?
And how can they preach unless they are sent?
As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those
who bring good news!"
(Romans 10:14-15)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the foundation of our belief. The power of the resurrection given to us through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit has raised us from spiritual death unto a glorious new life in Christ. It is through the power of the resurrected life that we are able (and compelled) to proclaim the message of life to a spiritually dead world. ***“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive”*** (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Between His crucifixion on the cross and His glorious resurrection from the grave, Jesus Christ faced the last great enemy of our souls, death (reference 1 Corinthians 15:26). In order to achieve for us the life He has for us, Jesus had to shut the mouth of the grave. ***“I will ransom you from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death...”*** (Hosea 13:14a). The great swallower of human souls would be swallowed up forever through the work of Jesus Christ who was willing to die for all mankind and face the monster who is never satisfied (reference Isaiah 25:8). ***“Death and Destruction are never satisfied...”*** (Proverbs 27:20).

***“Death has been swallowed up in victory.
‘Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?’ “
(1 Corinthians 15:54b, 55)***

When Jesus appeared to the disciples they had been hiding away, behind locked doors, for fear of death. Jesus knocked down the enemy that was holding them captive and keeping them paralyzed, and therefore unable to do the work that they were being called to do. ***“...so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death – that is, the devil – and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death”*** (Hebrews 2:14b, 15). The key to unlocking the door that has us trapped in a place of fear and death and opening the way to for us to experience confidence and life is belief. ***“I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life”*** (John 5:24). The devil can only influence people to sin and as a result of their response cause them to fall under sin’s penalty which is death. ***“For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord”*** (Romans 6:23). Jesus Christ holds the keys of death and Hades and has complete authority and control of their dominion (reference Revelation 1:18).

***“...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”
(2 Timothy 1:10)***

Jesus Christ is alive, for ever, and He has conquered death on our behalf; He will completely destroy death when He returns to defeat all His enemies at the great white throne judgment when death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14). It was sin that placed us under death’s power, but it is Christ’s sacrificial work on the cross that set us free from it’s shackles. Today, we are ***“more than conquerors through Him who loved us;”*** and Who gave His life up for us so we would no longer be the food that satisfies the appetite of the grave

(Romans 8:37). Jesus defeated death for us, so we have no reason to be defeated by sin. Our sin took Jesus to the depths of the grave to face that greedy monster death and we should not allow ourselves to be swallowed up again by living a life of sin. We have been given all the power we need to flee from temptation and sin (reference 1 Timothy 6:11-16). Satan is only taunting us to trap us and get us to fall in that pit again. Let us not feed that fleshly appetite that will, in turn, only lead to feeding the insatiable appetite of that monster called death. Jesus has already conquered sin and death for us – that is not a war we have to fight. We need to wield our mighty sword of the Spirit and walk in the newness of life that we have been given, instead of giving in to the old life that we were so accustomed to living.

We are faced with death all day long; the culture of sin, immorality, and corruption that pervades today, is a culture of death that seeks only to create victims to satisfy the appetite of the great monster, death. The grave, however, is never satisfied (reference Proverbs 30:15-16). Jesus is the only one who could, and who did, pay the ransom price to redeem us from the grave. Let us, therefore, focus our attention of feeding our own spiritual appetites with the Word of God so we can be nourished and strengthened to carry the message of life to another poor, hungry soul that is destined for the grave. We never have to fear death as long as we believe in the One who has given us life! May we take the keys we've been given and unlock the door to lead someone else who is trapped in fear to believe in Jesus Christ, so they too can experience new life (reference Matthew 16:19)!

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 49

Praise God that we have no reason to fear death. As believers, our eternal destination is secure and we can live our lives with confidence and joy. As we look forward to that glorious day when there will be no more pain and death (reference Revelation 21:4), let us make the most of every opportunity to share the gospel message with others who are living without hope and are fearful of death. We all have to face death at some point in our life. It is a glorious privilege to have the opportunity to choose life now while we still have the time. If we are truly pro-life we would not stand in the way, or stop proclaiming His Word, so that others might experience the life we have been given in Jesus Christ. Our life is not our own, may we make every effort to honor the extraordinary sacrifice that Jesus Christ gave for us, and not hold Him in contempt; instead, may we accept His gift with gratitude and humility, and live our lives in obedience, willing to lay down our lives so that others may hear and believe the message that completely changed our lives.

***“Hear this, all you peoples;
listen, all who live in this world,
both low and high, rich and poor alike:
My mouth will speak words of wisdom;
the utterance from my heart will give understanding...
Why should I fear when evil days come,***

*when wicked deceivers surround me...
No man can redeem the life of another
or give to God a ransom for him –
the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough –
that he should live on forever and not see decay.
But man, despite his riches, does not endure;
he is like the beasts that perish.
Like sheep they are destined for the grave,
and death will feed on them...
But God will redeem my life from the grave;
He will surely take me to Himself.”
(Psalm 49:1-3, 5-9, 12, 14a, 15)*

*Heavenly Father,
“Who is it that overcomes the world?
Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God.”
(1 John 5:5)
Thank you, Lord, that through Your sacrificial
work on the cross, and the power of the indwelling presence
of Your Holy Spirit, I have victory over sin and death in my life.
I praise you that I no longer fear death,
but can walk confidently through this life knowing
that I will be with You, whether You return for Your Bride now,
or choose to take me home when You are ready.
Help me to be bold and fearless to proclaim with confidence
the glorious message of Your Salvation so that others
may also be set free from the shackles of sin and death.
May you be glorified and honored in my life
today and for all eternity.
In Jesus’ Name. Amen.*

Day 35:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 21:1-25

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the most significant event in all of human history. The grandest of all stories ever told has survived the ages and has revolutionized the

world. All prior history was driven towards this event, and all history since has been driven by it (note that our entire dating system (B.C. "Before Christ," and A.D. "Anno Domini") is based on the advent of Jesus Christ). The cross of Jesus Christ is *the* message of the ages. We have heard it said that, "history is His story;" there is no other story, we are all participants, willing or not, in God's great narrative of mankind, in which He, as the Author, not only tells us, but shows us, His love.

When the Lord met His disciples for the third time (reference John 21:14), He found them right back where they had started, doing their own work instead of His. He had instructed them to meet Him at the Sea of Galilee, the place where He had first called them drop everything and follow Him, to show them how far they had come and how far they had left to go (reference Luke 5:1-11). ***"Friends, haven't you any fish?"*** (John 21:5). The Lord's first question to them must have pierced the hearts of these fishermen who had labored all night only to come up empty-handed. They were brave and diligent, these fishermen, and they certainly knew how to work and not give up despite the circumstances - these were the characteristics Jesus saw in them when He first chose them; and these are also the traits He looks for in those who choose to follow Him. In addition, they were also obedient listeners: ***"Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some"*** (v.6a). Their response to His command yielded an extraordinary catch they had not seen since He first opened their eyes just a couple of years earlier to a wondrous new life; this was all the reminder they needed.

"It is the Lord!"
(John 21:7a)

With those words, impetuous Peter, immediately jumped out of the boat and headed for shore. He found the Lord, always the servant, preparing them a meal. ***"Bring some of the fish you have just caught"*** (v.10). This time, Peter was able to drag the net himself, and even with such a large catch of fish the nets were not torn as they had been before (reference Luke 5:6-7). Jesus, ever the Teacher, wanted them to see that He would never give them any more than they could handle, but the work they were being sent out to do would be done in His strength and through His power alone. ***"Don't be afraid; from now on you will catch men"*** (Luke 5:10b). These great fishermen, now, after all they had been through, had learned what they needed to become great "fishers of men." Their impact and effectiveness would be completely dependent upon the Lord and their service would not be out of a sense of duty, but based solely on the power of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

"Follow Me!"
(John 21:19b)

The Resurrection of Christ is not a fable, but a fact. This message was carried by people who, not only saw an empty tomb, but who also saw Jesus alive. Jesus made many personal appearances after His resurrection to attest to this fact; and not just to one person, but to groups of two, seven, ten, eleven, and even five hundred people at one time (1 Corinthians 15:5-8). The fact that the disciples themselves did not believe that Jesus was alive until He convinced them otherwise only gives further evidence to support the Resurrection as historical fact not fiction; for who would be willing to die for a message that was nothing more than a lie. Believing what they had seen for themselves the disciples gave their lives over completely to carry the message of the cross. Coming face to face with the Risen Lord so greatly impacted and transformed their lives that they laid everything down, including their lives, to carry this message to the world; and praise God that they did!

Every day the message of the cross radically transforms and revolutionizes peoples lives. No other evidence is needed than the evidence of a changed life that has resulted when a lost sinner has come in contact with the Living Christ. The testimony of the transformation we have all experienced in our own lives is all the evidence we need to convince us that we should be willing to lay down our lives to carry the glorious message of Jesus Christ. We have not been called to a

cause, but to a Person – Jesus Christ; and His story should be our only and ever reoccurring theme. To preach Jesus Christ alone and Him Crucified should be the sole subject of our lives (reference 1 Corinthians 2:2). God has given each of us a number and a net, and despite our doubts, our fears, our failings, God, Himself, will see to it that none are lost. May we not limit God's ability to work through us because we are just too busy doing our own work to give attention to His. God has given us the master key to the heart of the hearer, just as He did for Peter (reference Matthew 16:18), may we use it to unlock the door and open the way for many to believe. ***“Do you love Me?”*** (John 21:17b) – If we truly did, we wouldn't be wasting time on half the things that consume our lives, but, instead, would be completely consumed with the only One worthy of our time – Jesus Christ! Pray and ask the Lord today to remove any doubts you might have regarding the call He has placed on your life and to re-ignite in you a passion for His kingdom work.

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,” says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read Acts 1:1-11

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the event that birthed the Church; out of His death the bride of Christ was born. He went to the grave to purchase us new life – a life that would be used for His purposes, not ours. Jesus died a physical death in human flesh so that a new body, His spiritual body, the Church, would be birthed; of which He is the Head.

***“And He is the head of the body, the church;
He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead,
so that in everything He might have the supremacy.
For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him,
and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things,
whether things on earth or things in heaven,
by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.”
(Colossians 1:18-20)***

As His spiritual Body, the Lord wants His Church to be strong, and, above all, to remain connected to Him. We don't want to lose our vital connection to the Head (reference Colossians 2:19). We have been resurrected to a new life in Christ and our body is connected to His. ***“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me”*** (Galatians 2:20a). All the power of His Resurrection has been deposited within us through the presence of His Holy Spirit. The Spirit of Jesus Christ lives within us to guide us and protect us as we now walk out the life He has purchased, planned, and purposed for us. ***“Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit”*** (Galatians 5:25).

Jesus spent forty days with His disciples after He was resurrected from the dead to assure that His work would continue in the world after He left. His message would now be carried through His disciples, and in the power of His Holy Spirit. ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and***

Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit of divine might was given to make the work of God effectual in the lives of His followers. The disciples were instructed to wait until they received that power before they began the work. While they waited patiently for the Lord, they gathered together and they worshiped the Lord (reference Acts 1:14). They did not know how long it would be before they received the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were simply instructed to wait; but they had learned, throughout the past forty days, that Jesus could show up at anytime and they didn’t want to miss any opportunity to encounter Him. ***“I am still confident of this: I will see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living. Wait for the LORD; be strong and take heart and wait for the LORD”*** (Psalm 27:13-14).

The disciples willingness to wait on God proved beneficial as the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them at Pentecost (reference Acts 2:1-4). The ministry of the Holy Spirit is absolutely necessary for the work of Jesus Christ to continue in the world. Far too often believers, today, attempt to do the work of God in their own strength, and like the disciples casting their nets without Christ’s help, come up empty handed. Charles Spurgeon has said, “We slander God with our very eagerness to work for Him without knowing Him.” If we knew Him, as we should, we would know that His work is done His way, in His time, and in His power. It will not be done in any other way. Therefore, it is essential that we take the time to understand His will through His Word each day. God has given us His instruction Book for life and a personal Guide in His Holy Spirit to lead us through this life to accomplish His will. If we aren’t utilizing these essential tools we are wasting energy and time that will yield nothing of any kingdom value. May we tap into the power we have given daily by meeting with the Lord daily in prayer and allowing Him to feed us from His Word so we will have all the nourishment and strength we need to carry His glorious message to the rest of the hungering world. A well-known Chinese proverb states that if you “Give a man a fish you feed him for a day, but if you teach a man to fish you feed him for a lifetime.” The Lord want us to learn this vital lesson and teach us to be completely dependent upon Him by becoming disciplined to meet with Him moment-by-moment, and meal-by-meal throughout each and every day. May we not miss a single opportunity to feast with our Lord; no other appointment is as important as this one is to keep. When we show up we will find He was already waiting for us, with the food we need already prepared! ***“Come and have breakfast*** (or lunch, or dinner, or a midnight snack!)” (John 21:12a). Praise Him that He is always there!

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 5

David was a man after God’s own heart who knew how to keep His appointments with God. If we are determined to do God’s work in the world we need to take the appropriate measures to be sure we are walking in His strength and power alone and according to His will. We find this in the time we spend in prayer with Him and in His Word. Every day should provide a wondrous opportunity for us to experience a divine encounter with the living, resurrected Lord; therefore we should make every effort to keep our appointments with Him and become more intentional about meeting with Him so we don’t miss out on anything He may have for us (consider missing Pentecost!). He has given us new life in Him and we should want nothing more than to live our

lives to honor Him with all we say and do; and there is no better way to honor Him than to do the thing that He loves most to do – which is to spend intimate time with us! Offer Him a prayer of praise for the tender loving way He takes the time to reveal Himself daily to you.

***“Give ear to my words, O LORD,
consider my sighing.
Listen to my cry for help,
my King and my God, for to You I pray.
In the morning, O LORD, You hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my request before You
and wait in expectation.”
(Psalm 5:1-3)***

***Heavenly Father,
“How majestic is Your name in all the earth!”
(Psalm 8:1b)
“I trust in Your unfailing love;
my heart rejoices in Your salvation.
I will sing to the LORD,
for He has been good to me.”
(Psalm 13:5-6)
“[You] have given me an instructed tongue,
to know the word that sustains the weary.
[You] waken me morning by morning,
[You] waken my ear to listen like one being taught.”
(Isaiah 50:4)
“Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed,
for His compassions never fail.
They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.
I say to myself, ‘The LORD is my portion;
therefore I will wait for Him.’
The LORD is good to those whose hope is in Him,
to the one who seeks Him;
it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD.”
(Lamentations 3:22-26)
Thank You, Abba, for never failing to be there when I
need to meet with You – instill in me a hunger
to want to be with You as You desire every day
to want to spend time with me.
Find in me a “Daniel’s” heart and obedience
to meet with You three times a day (Daniel 6:10).
Be honored and be glorified in my life today.
In Jesus’ Mighty Name. I pray. Amen.***

Day 36:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 14:1-6

What a sweet reminder yesterday was that our Lord is a God of restoration and renewal. He did not leave Peter to bear the weight of humiliation and shame for rejecting the One he loved so much; no, the Lord tenderly, but sternly, restored this wounded warrior and sent him back into battle. Jesus came to earth as the Bread of Life to nourish us and feed us with His life-sustaining and replenishing heavenly manna, Himself; and through His resurrection from the dead He deposited within us the fullness of His life so that we would be restored, revived and rebuilt! Human life cannot be sustained without renewal from God. Apart from Christ's work on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead, our lives would continue to decay to the point of death. Jesus fed His disciples with physical and spiritual manna so they would know the necessity of daily restoring the soul by feeding on the Word of God. Without daily restoration in the Word and prayer we are ill-equipped to face the constant assaults and afflictions that are an integral part of the Christian life. God's purpose all along has been to make us one with Himself so we can walk with Him here on earth, and live with Him for eternity in heaven.

***"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in Me.
In My Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you.
I am going there to prepare a place for you.
And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come back
and take you to be with Me that you also may be where I am.
You know the way to the place where I am going."
(John 14:1-4)***

Jesus settled His disciples troubled hearts by calling them to trust in Him (reference Proverbs 3:5-6). How vital their faith would be when the time was coming for Him to leave (reference John 13:33). The work the Father had sent Him to do was almost finished and He would soon be returning to heaven. Prior to His crucifixion, the news that He was leaving greatly disturbed His followers; now that they had seen Him alive and were given the mission of their lives, they were filled with greater determination, having learned the importance of relying completely on Him. Jesus assured them He would return again; they could hardly doubt His words now after spending time with their risen Lord, who once was dead, but is now alive!

***"I am the way and the truth and the life.
No one comes to the Father except through Me."
(John 14:6)***

Jesus is the only way to heaven. There is no other way - no work, no payment, no other religion can gain for us what only Christ, in His sinless perfection, could do. Jesus paid the price to gain us entrance by laying down His body as a sacrifice to open the way for us to enter into His Divine Presence. ***"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body..."*** (Hebrews 10:19-20). Jesus gained us access to the heavenly Father through His death (reference Ephesians 2:18), and has deposited His life within us through the presence of His Holy Spirit; we have experienced the power of His resurrection through believing in Him and have been transformed (and being transformed) into His spiritual body which is to be used to lead the way for others to come to salvation. Christianity was even called "the Way" in the early

church (reference Acts 9:2); and their message rested on the truth that Jesus Christ was crucified, buried and is now alive, and is the only way to God. **"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"** (Acts 4:12).

***"And a highway will be there;
it will be called the Way of Holiness.
The unclean will not journey on it;
it will be for those who walk in that Way."
(Isaiah 35:8)***

Only those who trust in Jesus will go to heaven; whether we get there through the experience of physical death or being alive when He returns (John 11:25-26; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). The assurance of our eternal state with Him should fill us with constant joy and numb the pain of any trouble we might sustain in this life. Paul, who once was a zealous persecutor of those who were of the Way (reference Acts 22:4), experienced this joy when he encountered Christ, for himself, and he, too, became a follower of the Way (reference Acts 24:14). ***"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us"*** (Romans 8:18). May we make every effort to stay on the righteous path that Jesus has paved for us with His blood and walk uprightly in that Way so we can prepare the Way of the Lord's return (Matthew 3:3). Let us draw near to the Lord and remain diligent in the Word so we can hear His voice daily and know the way we are to walk. ***"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it'"*** (Isaiah 30:21).

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Ephesians 4:1-16

The Lord has poured His Holy Spirit into our lives to lead us to walk in His way and to follow His will. He has given us the Holy Spirit of Divine Knowledge to lead us into all truth. It is God's truth that leads us to salvation and strengthens our walk to remain in the way so that others may also be lead to that same truth. ***"If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free"*** (John 8:31-32).

We have been set free from the shackles of sin and have the hope and promise of eternal life in heaven. We no longer live in ignorance, but have been given the Spirit of Knowledge to guide us as we walk in obedience to the truth of God's Word. What freedom we have been given to live life in our fleshly abode knowing that no matter what happens to this body we will continue to live (reference 2 Corinthians 4:8-18). Because Jesus Christ rose from the dead, we, who believe, have the glorious promise of passing through this life into the Presence of the Lord. While we are still here on this earth, however, we are exhorted to live our lives in obedience to God's Word and to the glory of God.

***"As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life
worthy of the calling you have received.
Be completely humble and gentle; be patient,***

***bearing with one another in love.
Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace."
(Ephesians 4:1-3)***

The Lord's purpose was to make us one with Himself so, we, in turn would become one with each other. *The degree to which the church is spiritually united declares to the spiritual powers in the heavenly realms the wisdom of God* (reference Ephesians 3:10, NIV). The body of Christ is depicted much like the human body; it is made up of many parts, and all those parts are necessary for the body to function properly. We are unified by love and built on the foundation of biblical truth; and we are called to unite both as we minister in the name of Jesus Christ.

***"Instead, speaking the truth in love,
we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head,
that is, Christ. From Him the whole body,
joined and held together by every supporting ligament,
grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."
(Ephesians 4:15-16)***

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead gave the Church it's life; it is the foundation the church was built upon. The Resurrection also gave the church its' voice; that Christ has been crucified, was buried, and now is alive is the message we are called to proclaim. And we are to do so ***"speaking the truth in love."*** We show true Christian love when we share the truth with our brothers no matter how much it might hurt them. The church has grown weak in recent years because sin and immorality have been allowed to grow like a cancer in the name of love, instead of being cut out in the name of truth. We are to ***"bear with one another in love,"*** but to neglect the truth in the process could risk paralyzing the entire body. The Lord has unified His spiritual body, the church, we are each simply called to do our part, as an important and vital member of the body, to see that it remains strong, healthy, and effective. May we make every effort to build up the Body of Christ making every effort to stay healthy and strong; and to speak out against anything or anyone that may try to weaken it or tear it down. May we be willing help those who are weak, and seek to encourage and exhort one another, in love and truth, so the body can grow up into the fullness of Christ (reference Ephesians 4:13).

***"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,
may have power, together with all the saints,
to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -
that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of Christ."
(Ephesians 3:18-19)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Psalm 56

We have gained entrance into the presence of God through the shed blood of Jesus Christ our Lord. The veil to the Most Holy Place has been torn down and we now have unlimited access to the throne of God. We have received the key that the world does not have and we should be using it daily to find the assurance, confidence and trust that we need to walk in the will and way of the Lord. How grateful we should be that we can trust a living, loving God who works powerfully on our behalf. Our money is inscribed with "In God We Trust" as a visible reminder that money and wealth will not change the world or transform our lives, only our faith in God will (reference Luke 16:13). The power we have will never come from the dollar, it absolutely rests in the Divine power of our resurrected Lord. Every time we lay down a dollar or a coin, we should be reminded to lay all our hope and trust in God alone; for He alone is our greatest treasure and the only investment of our lives that will reap eternal rewards. This evening may we lift our hearts in praise to the One whom belongs all wisdom, honor, power and glory; and pray fervently for our nation to recognize how far we have fallen from the foundation we were built upon and return once again in whole-hearted devotion to the One who can bring healing and health to our land (reference 2 Chronicles 7:14).

***"In God, whose word I praise,
in the LORD, whose word I praise -
In God I trust; I will not be afraid.
What can man do to me?
I am under vows to you, O God;
I will present my thank offerings to You.
For You have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling,
that I may walk before God in the light of life."
(Psalm 56:10-13)***

***Heavenly Father,
"I have chosen the way of truth;
I have set my heart on Your laws."
(Psalm 119:30)
"You love is ever before me,
and I walk continually in Your truth."
(Psalm 26:3)
"Show me Your ways, O LORD,
teach me Your paths;
guide me in Your truth and teach me,
for You are God my Savior,
and my hope is in You all day long."
(Psalm 25:5)
"Teach me Your way, O LORD,
and I will walk in Your truth."
(Psalm 86:11a)
May my life be an open door that
will lead many to walk in the Way
that You have graciously led me to.
I want my life to honor You and bless Your holy name.
Be glorified and magnified in my life today.
In the Powerful name of Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.***

Day 37:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 14:7-14

Jesus opened the way for mankind to gain access to the Father in heaven. ***"No one comes to the Father except through Me"*** (John 14:6b). The hinge on the door which opens heaven is the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who, through His death opened up a ***"new and living way"*** (Hebrews 10:20) into the Most Holy Place, which is the very presence of God. Divine access to the throne room of heaven was formerly denied to man because of our sin. However, Jesus Christ, our perfect, sinless, great High Priest, stepped down from His throne in heaven and willingly laid down His life, as the only perfect and acceptable sacrifice, to atone for our sin once and for all. By laying down His life for our sins He tore open the veil that had previously kept us separated from the Father, and opened the way for us to experience His eternal life, both now and forever. There is no other way to the heavenly Father, except through Jesus Christ.

***"If you really knew Me, you would know My Father as well.
From now on, you do know Him and have seen Him."
(John 14:7)***

Through His sacrificial and atoning work on the cross, and His Resurrection from the dead, Jesus, has connected us to the Father in heaven. He has revealed the Father to us and now we can know the Father and Creator of the world. ***"No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made Him known"*** (John 1:18). Jesus came to make us one with Himself, and by doing so He has also made us one with the Father. ***"I and the Father are one"*** (John 10:30). Jesus does not want us to only know Him and the Father academically, He wants us to know Him intimately. His entire work in the world is meant to bring us into a deeper, more personal, and abiding relationship with the Father. The consuming desire of our hearts, like the apostle Paul, should be to know God better (reference Philippians 3:10-11). He has gone out of His way to reveal Himself to us and to provide the way for us to have communion with Him. Jesus opened the way for us to become a part of His family, with God as our Father, and through His obedience to the Father we now have the right to be called sons and daughters of God (reference John 1:12; 2 Corinthians 6:18). ***"Today I have become your Father"*** (Psalm 2:7; Acts 13:33). We are His children, and He is our Father. As our Father, He is concerned about our needs (that is why He sent His Son to die for us!) and wants nothing more for us than to rest securely in the shelter of His protection and tender-loving care. He wants us to be dependent upon Him; and we do that through a daily diet of the Word of God and spending intimate time alone with Him in prayer.

***"And by Him we cry, 'Abba, Father.' "
(Romans 8:15)***

Jesus revealed to us the love of the Father by becoming His love offering for the sins of the world (reference John 3:16). In doing so He opened the way for us to experience the full weight of the heavenly Father's love through a life of intimacy and trust. Our heavenly Father wants us to

rely on Him fully, and not on ourselves. He knows our every need and when we come to Him in prayer we show Him that we are dependent upon Him. Jesus exemplified a life of prayer while on earth and by doing so showed His disciples how dependent He was upon the Father everyday. They saw His example and asked Him to teach them how to pray (reference Luke 11:1).

***"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me
will do what I have been doing.
He will do even greater things than these,
because I am going to the Father.
And I will do whatever you ask in My name,
so that the Son may bring glory to the Father.
You may ask Me for anything in My name, and I will do it."
(John 14:12-14)***

The great work of God is accomplished in the world through prayer. Jesus revealed, through meeting with the Father daily, the importance of prayer as the key component to Him fulfilling the Father's will. Jesus declared that we too would have opportunity to do even ***"greater things"*** through prayer, because Jesus not only gained us access to the Father, but Jesus, Himself, would be sitting at the Father's right hand interceding for us (reference Hebrews 7:25), and His Holy Spirit would be within us to help us in our prayer life as He guides us through His Word to learn how to pray more effectively according to His will. ***"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of Him"*** (1 John 5:15). The scepter of our loving Father and our eternal King of kings will be extended to us when we come to Him in prayer and ask of Him the things that please His heart and further His work in the world. This is the privilege of every son and daughter of God (reference Romans 8:15-16). Every request we bring to Him should be for the purpose of glorifying His name and accomplishing His will, not ours. May we follow the Lord's own pattern for prayer as spend our time this morning in prayer. Jesus has connected our hearts to the heart of the Father and desires that we commune daily with Him there. Let's pray!

***"Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed by Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation.
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power
and the glory forever. Amen."
(Matthew 6:9-13, NKJV)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

“Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD Almighty.” (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power – Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Christ’s Resurrection from the dead gave birth to the spiritual Body of Christ and connected us to the Head. The key component to maintaining this vital union depends upon the condition and health of our heart, both individually and corporately as His Church. The Lord has given us His Holy Spirit to guard our hearts and to guide us into all truth and to use that knowledge and understanding of God’s will to ***“speak the truth in love”*** so the Body can be built up and grow to attain the full measure of Christ (reference Ephesians 4:12-13, 15).

***“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.
There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord.
There are different kinds of working, but the same God
works all of them in all men.”
(1 Corinthians 12:4-6)***

When God formed us in our physical bodies He gave each of us unique natural talents and abilities that set us apart from others. When we entered into Christ’s body, through faith. We became the recipients of God’s “spiritual gifts” which the Lord provides through His Holy Spirit to help promote unity within the Body. The gift or gifts we receive are the tools we are to use to build the spiritual house of God and bring glory to His name (see Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12:3-11, 27-31; and Ephesians 4:11 for the three lists of Spiritual gifts given in the New Testament). Some gifts may be more important than the others, but the Body will not function properly if all the parts (believers) are not working together and in proper working order (reference 1 Corinthians 14:12).

The Lord saved us to be united together with Him as One, just as He and the Father are one, and He placed us into His Body so we would function together as one in the bonds of peace. ***“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit...”*** (Ephesians 4:3, 4a). We are to devote the gift(s) we have been given for the purpose of edifying and unifying the whole church. ***“Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good”*** (1 Corinthians 12:7). Our spiritual gifts are discovered (and developed) as we join together in fellowship with other members of the Body of Christ. Since our gifts are meant to bless and build up the Church we cannot achieve this goal if we are cut off from the Body. Imagine the challenge of having to work if your hand was cut off from your physical body. The body as a whole is made weaker when we are missing any of our members.

One of the ways the spiritual body of Christ is made weaker is when believers use their spiritual gifts as a weapon to cause division and destruction, rather than as a tool to build up and bring unity. The gifts we have been given, by God through His Holy Spirit (they are not of our own making) are to promote harmony in the Church, not to promote our own selfish ambitions. While it is true that some of the gifts are more important to the Church, every gift is necessary and no one should be looked down upon because of the gift they have been given. Some of the more unsightly members of our physical body are vital to the functioning of our body, and God keeps them hidden on the inside where no one even knows they’re there (i.e. the heart, the kidneys, etc.). When we are divided as a Body we become weak and our testimony to the world wanes. ***“May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me”*** (John 17:23). It is essential that we use our gifts to build each other up so the Body of Christ can be strong and the witness we display to the world will bring glory to His name. May we not waste the extraordinary gifts that have been poured out upon us like spoils from the war that our Lord has conquered victoriously, but rather take every measure necessary to develop them fully so that we can lead others in the triumphant procession of the victory of Christ (reference Isaiah 53:12)!

“Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others,

*faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.
If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God.
If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides,
so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.
To Him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen."
(1 Peter 4:10-11)*

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read Psalm 103

Through Jesus Christ our Lord we are now able to experience fellowship with our Heavenly Father. Our Father in heaven is a gracious and benevolent Father who desires to give His children all good gifts. Through His hand and by His power we have been given the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit so we grow and develop in a way that will be pleasing to Him and bring glory to His name. It is the Father's power that is behind all the effectual work that His Body does in the world. This is why our connection to our Father is so vital for the body of Christ. It has been said that a church without prayer is a church without God. Prayer is our native language, it is how we communicate with God. If we don't talk with Him, as Jesus exemplified for us while He lived and walked on this earth, how can we possibly function in the way He has purposed for us. When our mind is not set on Christ our mind will be at risk to follow the patterns of the world and soon the world's standards will become the church's standards. If we lose our connection to the Head, we will certainly lose our mind and the mind without Christ is set for a course of discouragement, despair, and destruction. May we seek daily to keep that vital connection to our Father in prayer and exercise the gifts He has given us to promote spiritual health in the body so His Body will be made strong to do the work of advancing His kingdom in the world, instead of being to weak to ward of the advancement of the world into the church. May we eat every spiritual morsel He has placed on our plate and make our Abba, Daddy proud! Lift up your hearts in praise, you are a son or daughter of the eternal King of kings – all the wealth of His kingdom is available to you, use it all to honor and glorify Him!

***"As a father has compassion on His children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear Him;
for He knows how we are formed,
He remembers that we are dust.
As for man, his days are like grass,
he flourishes like a flower of the field;
the wind blows over it and it is gone,
and its place remembers it no more.
But from everlasting to everlasting
the LORD's love is with those who fear Him,
and His righteousness with their children's children –
with those who keep His covenant and remember to obey His precepts.
The LORD has established His throne in heaven,***

*and His kingdom rules over all.
Praise the LORD, you His angels,
you mighty ones who do His bidding,
who obey His word.
Praise the LORD, all His heavenly hosts,
you His servants who do His will.
Praise the LORD, all His works everywhere in His dominion.
Praise the LORD, O my soul.”
(Psalm 103:13-22)*

*Heavenly Father,
I praise You for You are my “Everlasting Father”
You are an enduring, passionate provider and protector.
(Isaiah 9:6)
Thank you for the tender loving way You care for me each day.
May I use the gifts You have so generously bestowed upon Me
to edify Your body. May Your Holy Spirit within me
help me to be diligent to develop them
fully so I can do my part as a healthy functioning
member of Your body so that Your body will be strong
and so You will get the glory when many
are drawn by Your power into Your family.
Be glorified with the fruit of my life that is
born out of a life of intimacy that I have found in You.
I am humbled and grateful to be Your child.
Forgive me for any stubbornness or for putting my will
in the path of Yours today.
Give me Your daily bread, I pray,
and keep my feet firm to walk straight in Your Way.
I want my life to bring You glory and honor every day.
Be glorified Heavenly Father, I pray.
In Jesus’ Powerful Name. Amen.*

Day 38:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 14:15-24

Praise God that He is a God of all comfort. Jesus assured His disciples they had no reason to worry or fear; all they needed to do was trust in Him (reference John 14:1). He had never given them any reason to doubt. Everything He has ever said has been truthful and everything He has done has been for their benefit, and ours. Jesus' work of the cross bridged the great divide that separated sinful man from holy God and we now have access into the Most Holy Place, into the very Presence of God the Father. Jesus assured His disciples that He would be with the Father, and that through prayer they would be immediately connected to Him and the Father. The Father would always be available to spend time with His children. Every day we have the divine privilege as believers in Jesus Christ to enter the throne room of heaven and sit at the feet of Jesus, bask in the presence of the Father, and enjoy fellowship with Him there. There is no greater comfort than to know that we are always welcome there, and because we are His children we can ask Him for anything in His name and He will do it (v. 13-14).

***"And I will ask the Father,
and He will give you another Counselor
to be with you forever - the Spirit of truth."
(John 14:16, 17a)***

But before we could ask anything, Jesus, our great intercessor, knew exactly what we would need to walk out this life in the new life He had purchased for us on the cross. Jesus was leaving to go to the Father, but He was not leaving us empty-handed or powerless. He prayed to the Father and asked that we be equipped with His power so we would be enabled to do His work in the world (reference John 15:26-27). Our benevolent Heavenly Father, who gives us all good things, and who did not spare His Only Son that we might be set free from our shackles of sin and find fellowship with Him, again, gave us His very best by giving to us the life that Christ purchased for us by going to the grave. The power of the resurrected life of Christ would be given to all who would believe on Him.

When we were still guilty in our sins, Jesus stood in the courtroom of heaven and willingly accepted the judgment we deserved. He offered His own life up as payment for the penalty of our sins and was sent to earth to fulfill our sentence. Now that our sin debt has been paid in full, by the shed blood of Jesus Christ, we have been set free from the law of sin and death and no longer suffer condemnation (reference Romans 8:1-2). Jesus, however, knew we would need an Advocate on our side to keep us from getting into trouble with the law and to be the "counsel in our defense" when the enemy of God would seek to accuse us (reference 1 John 2:1; Revelation 12:10). Therefore He deposited His Spirit within us to live with us forever and to guide us into His truth.

***"If you love Me, you will obey what I command.
Whoever has My commands and obeys them,
he is the one who loves Me."
(John 14:15, 21a)***

The Father knew we could not fulfill the requirements of the Law on our own and therefore sent His Son to take our place; and, while we are no longer under the control or condemnation of the law, it still remains for us as a moral guide. Now that we have the life of Christ within us, through the indwelling presence of His Holy Spirit, we have all the power we need to walk this life in obedience to God. Without the help of the Holy Spirit we could not live out the Christian life as God has purposed for us. The Holy Spirit guides us into God's truth and illuminates His Word so we can walk obediently in His truth. God's Word is truth, it was written by His Spirit and is revealed to us through His Spirit, if we are willing to be obedient and diligent students of the Word. If we truly love the Lord we will seek to know Him in His Word more and more each day. Without love for God we have no compelling reason to obey His Word. As we spend time with Him in His Word each day we can't help but fall more in love with Him and become more determined to obey Him day by day. Jesus gave up His life to gain for us this glorious union with

the Father, it should be our greatest pursuit and highest honor to spend each day nurturing this relationship. For when we do, we have the great privilege of experiencing the divine power of the full presence of the Trinity, Who desire to lead us into all truth.

***"We know we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.
The man who says, "I know Him," but does not do what He commands is a liar,
the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys the Word,
God's love is truly made complete in him.
This is how we know we are in Him:
whoever claims to live in Him must walk as Jesus did."
(1 John 2:3-5)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

When Jesus was baptized at the beginning of His earthly ministry, the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove (reference Matthew 3:16). His baptism provides for us a beautiful picture of what the Lord has in store for all believers at the moment of salvation when we, too, are baptized by the Holy Spirit. This baptism happens the moment we believe, when we place our trust in Christ, the Holy Spirit places the believer into the body of Christ; at this point of conversion our new life "in Christ" begins, through the power of His Holy Spirit (reference 1 Corinthians 12:13).

***"The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts;
and though all its parts are many, they form one body.
So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body -
whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free - and we were all given the one Spirit to drink."
(1 Corinthians 12:12-13)***

Because we are one "spiritual" body in Christ, God's purpose for us is to be unified. Likewise, just as the physical body is made up of many body parts to help the body function properly, so too, the body of Christ is made up of many members who are necessary to make the body function as it should. The diversity of the Body of Christ is seen in the working of the gifts within the church. Each part is necessary for the Body to continue to grow and minister. ***"But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as He wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body"*** (v.18-20). Every member of the body is important for it to function properly. In addition, each member does not function independently but as a unit. ***"...but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it"*** (1 Corinthians 12:25b, 26). God calls us to care for one another and has given each of us a special gift, or gifts, to help build up the other members of the body. When every member of the body is healthy the entire body reaps its' benefits.

God has distributed the His gifts to His body according to His perfect plan for each local congregation. Just as no individual has all the gifts, not every congregation has all the gifts. God

has a purpose for each church, and has given them exactly what they need to accomplish His will, in His way, and in His time. **"Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end..."** (1 Corinthians 1:7, 8a) It is vital, therefore, that we develop and exercise our own individual gifts in the local body that we have been divinely appointed to so that the body can be made strong. If we don't use the gifts we have been given in the place we have been called to we can weaken the body and hinder its' effectiveness. **"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it"** (v.27).

We have been baptized into the body of Christ, and, now that we belong to Him, we need the daily refreshment of the living water of the Word provided by the Holy Spirit to keep us spiritual healthy and help us become a productive member of His Body. It is essential that each member of the Body of Christ receives spiritual nourishment through the Word of God every day so they can be a strong and healthy, fully functioning member of the body. Take time to strengthen the body today by spending some time in prayer asking God to show you how you can better serve the members of His body. Be willing to exercise the gift(s) you've been given by extending a helping hand to another member who may be in a weakened state. **"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please his neighbor for his good, to build him up"** (Romans 15:1-2).

***"For this reason, since the day we heard about you,
we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill
you with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.
And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord
and may please Him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work,
growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power
according to His glorious might so that you may have great endurance
and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father,
who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints
in the kingdom of light."
(Colossians 1:9-12)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Psalm 112

God has given us His life so that we can be bring His life and truth to the world. He has provided us His Holy Spirit so we can be filled with His truth and walk victoriously in His Way. His desire is that we would be strengthened in His power and through His Word each and every day, so we can be a source of encouragement and strength to the other members of His body. Praise Him today for the gift(s) you have been given that He has chosen especially for you for the purpose of building up His body. Make the most of your time to discover and develop those gifts to their full potential so that you can bring honor to His body by being a strong and vital member who will help to build His kingdom and bring His glory to the world.

**"Praise the LORD.
 Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,
 who finds great delight in His commands.
 His children will be mighty in the land;
 the generation of the upright will be blessed.
 Wealth and riches are in his house,
 and his righteousness endures forever.
 Even in darkness light dawns for the upright,
 for the gracious and compassionate and righteous man.
 Good will come to him who is generous and lends freely,
 who conducts his affairs with justice.
 Surely he will never be shaken;
 a righteous man will be remembered forever.
 He will have no fear of bad news;
 his heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.
 His heart is secure, he will have no fear;
 in the end he will look in triumph on his foes.
 He has scattered abroad his gifts to the poor,
 his righteousness endures forever;
 his horn will be lifted high in honor.
 The wicked man will see and be vexed,
 he will gnash his teeth and waste away;
 the longings of the wicked will come to nothing."
 (Psalm 112:1-10)**

**Heavenly Father,
 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every
 spiritual blessing in Christ."
 (Ephesians 1:3)
 Thank you for the presence of Your Holy Spirit who
 daily guides me into Your truth.
 There is no place I'd rather be, than spending time
 with Your Word and learning Your will for my life
 and Your purposes for Your Church.
 The more I grow the more I know the responsibility I have
 to share Your truth with those who have not experienced that privilege.
 Help me use the gifts you have given me to strengthen
 Your bride so she will be dressed and ready when her Bridegroom
 arrives. May I speak Your truth in love, and help those who
 are in need. Help me to not grow weary, but be willing to come
 alongside a weaker member who may have failed,
 but who You desire to be restored and strengthened.
 Help me not to judge those who may not be doing their part to
 make the body stronger, but to always be obedient to Your commands**

*and be willing to encourage them along.
May Your body be a strong and mighty tower that
the world will run to in its' time of need and find
the help they are looking for by opening their hearts to believe.
"Now to Him who is able to establish you by my gospel
and the proclamation of Jesus Christ...
to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ!
Amen."
(Romans 16:25, 27)*

Day 39:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 14:25-31

Our heavenly Father knows our every need. How blessed we are that not only does He know our needs, He is a loving Father who meets our needs; and all He wants from us in return is for us to want to meet with Him and experience the peace and joy of fellowship that He finds with us. Every detail of His wonderful Creation was designed to provide for our every need; and as long as He walked among us, showing us and showering us with His glory, our every need would be met. **"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well"** (Matthew 6:33). Tragically, the beauty and harmony of God's glorious garden was disturbed by an intruder who wanted nothing more than to disrupt and destroy this perfect relationship between God and man. How amazing our Sovereign God is to be prepared with a wondrous plan when the security and peace of His garden was breached.

***"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you.
I do not give as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."
(John 14:27)***

Our God is a God of order, Who has planned and purposed His Creation to fit His perfect will. His preparation is impeccable and His timing is perfect. In this most beloved Chapter of John, which we have been studying this past week, our Lord has given us all the security and peace we need to know that everything is still in His perfect, creative, and powerful hand. We have nothing to worry about or to fear as long as we put our trust in Him. He has not missed a detail in fulfilling His wondrous kingdom plan, and in these verses we find the comfort we need to follow Him without concern or care. He is at work in heaven preparing a home for us to be with Him there, and He is praying for us that we would not waste the time we have been given, but use it to prepare for the day when He comes to finally take us home.

***"You heard Me say, 'I am going away and I am coming back to you.'
If you loved Me you would be glad that I am going to the Father,
for the Father is greater than I."
(v.28)***

Jesus Christ came to earth to prepare us to dwell in the glorious kingdom of God. The work He did while He was here paid our bride-price and purchased our bridal garments for that great wedding day to come. He exchanged our sin-stained rags for His glorious garment of righteousness (reference Isaiah 61:10). When He looks upon His Bride, He sees her as a Bridegroom sees His Bride on their wedding day, beautiful, spotless, perfect, without sin or blemish, and through the eyes and heart of love. Our wedding garment has been purchased and our heavenly home is being prepared, we now need to be ready for our wedding day is drawing near and our Bridegroom is returning for us soon.

***"But the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what My Father has commanded Me."
(John 14:31)***

The Lord has not left us to prepare for that great wedding day all by ourselves, He has given us His Holy Spirit to guide, comfort and lead us along the way so we will be perfected to fit in our heavenly home. ***"But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have said to you"*** (John 14:26). The presence of power that dwells within us through the Holy Spirit provides the peace we need to continue the work we have been called to do, and gives us the confidence we need to complete the work without fear of the trials we will face as we eagerly anticipate His return. God has given us His extraordinary gift of peace, by faith, through the relationship we now have with the Father, through the Son, and by the Holy Spirit's presence in our life. We must continue to nurture and grow this vital relationship to experience His endless peace so we will be prepared to share His peace with others.

***"You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming.
That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.
But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.
So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with Him."
(2 Peter 3:11b-14)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

The relationship that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit provides the model of perfection that God is looking for in all relationships. The unity and diversity of the trinity provides the bases for how the Lord has established His spiritual body, the church, to function. Each part of the God-head has a vital and important role and no part competes with the other, they work together in perfect unison. At the heart of this perfect union we find the bases and motivation for all God does - Love! This is the way He has called us to live and walk - the way of love!

***"And now I will show you the most excellent way."
(1 Corinthians 12:31)***

When Jesus walked this earth He exemplified the love of the Father by obeying all the Father had commanded for Him to do, by laying down His life for us, and by giving us His Spirit who has poured His love into our hearts (reference Romans 5:5). This is His high and holy standard He has set for us to follow. ***"Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another"*** (John 13:34). This is the most important lesson Jesus taught as He lived and fulfilled His mission on this earth; for without love as the motivation behind the work we do, the work is useless (and destructive) and powerless to affect the world for the glory of God. Love is the native language of the child of God, if we don't ***"speak the truth in love"*** the words we speak are nothing but noise (reference 1 Corinthians 13:1); instead of leading a procession into the presence of Christ the lost world will close their ears and miss the good news.

The mark of maturity in the Christian life is a growing love for God and those He has commanded us to love (reference Matthew 22:37-40). Paul had witnessed the abuses of God's spiritual gifts within the church and he wrote these beautiful words in Chapter 13 to exhort the people to stop walking in a divisive and selfish way, but rather fulfill the command of Christ and walk in love. ***"And this is love: that we walk in obedience to His commands. As you have heard from the beginning, His command is that you walk in love"*** (2 John 6). Beloved, God has given us the Holy Spirit of Complete Knowledge to lead us into His Truth and guide us to walk the path of love that the Father prepared for us by sending His Son and in which Jesus Christ paved for us with His precious blood. May we take the knowledge we are growing in through God's Word and not keep it to ourselves but use it to enrich and edify the lives of others so the Body of Christ can be built up. ***"Knowledge puffs up but love builds up"*** (1 Corinthians 8:1b). May we grow in His grace and walk in His love each and every day. Take some time to meditate on these words of love and exercise them in your relationships today.

***"Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,
it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres."
Love never fails."
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Psalm 107

The Lord has displayed His love for us in the most extraordinary way. He laid down His life so we could experience the full weight of the Father's love and glory and live in His love with Him for all

eternity. The self-sacrificial way He expresses His love for us is the way He expects, and commands, for us to show His love to others (reference John 15:17). The life we now live is not our own, the love He has poured into us through His Holy Spirit is not meant for our benefit alone, all that He has done for us is meant to be shared so that His Body can grow to maturity and experience the fullness of His love for all eternity. As we grow in His love may we find ourselves falling more deeply in love with the One Who is love, and desire nothing more than to share His love so He can receive all that He deserves. Let us return to Him the love He has so graciously and abundantly and sacrificially poured out upon us. As you face the difficulty and pain of the trials in your life today, chose to respond in love and you will have chosen the more excellent way. **"Do everything in love"** (1 Corinthians 16:14). When you walk the path of love you are walking an eternal, enduring path that will only lead you to a high and holy place - in the presence of the One who will never fail or disappoint you! Rejoice and be exceeding glad for His amazing love!

***"Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good;
His love endures forever.
Let the redeemed of the LORD say this -
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love
and His wonderful deeds for men,
for He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love
and His wonderful deeds for men.
Let them sacrifice thank offerings
and tell of His works with songs of joy.
Let them give thanks to the LORD for His unfailing love
and His wonderful deeds for men.
Let them exalt Him in the assembly of the people
and praise Him in the council of the elders.
Whoever is wise, let him heed these things
and consider the great love of the LORD."
(Psalm 107:1-2a, 8-9, 21-22, 31-32, 43)***

***Heavenly Father,
"I will sing for the One I love"
(Isaiah 5:1a)
Thank You for Your endless and eternal love
You have poured into my life and for the peace
and contentment that I now have because of
the great expression of Your love.
Help me to show Your love to the world
as You have shown it to me by being obedient
even unto death so that I might experience Your amazing love.
"I pray that out of Your glorious riches You may strengthen
Your Body with power with Your Spirit in our inner being,
so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith.
And I pray that, being rooted and established in love,
we may have power together with all the saints,***

***to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,
and to know this love that surpasses knowledge -
that we might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God."
(Ephesians 3:16-19)***

***May we always love the Lord our God and continue
to walk daily in Your ways until the whole earth is
filled with the glory of God and lifts up Your name
in eternal praise. Be glorified as I walk in Your Peace
and follow Your path of love today.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.***

Day 40:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 12:12-19

It was the first day of the week and all the pilgrims had arrived in Jerusalem for the celebration of Passover. Pesach was one of three annual pilgrimages the Jewish men were required to make to the temple (reference Exodus 23:14-17). ***"It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians"*** (Exodus 12:27a). The Lord was making His final entrance into Jerusalem to complete the work the Father had sent Him to do. He looked upon the city with great sadness, while the people welcomed Him as a conquering king (reference Luke 19:37-41).

***"Hosanna!"
"Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"
"Blessed is the King of Israel!"
(John 12:13)***

The people had seen and heard about this man who performed miracles and helped so many people, and they readily proclaimed Him as Messiah, believing He would save them from the political powers of Rome, as Israel had been rescued from the oppressive control of Pharaoh in Egypt centuries before. They waved palm branches and laid down their garments in honor of the One who would bring them victory (a prophetic act symbolizing the way the Lord would expect us to worship Him with our lives by laying down our garment of human flesh). Indeed, He had come to establish His kingdom, and the government would surely be upon His shoulders (reference Isaiah 9:6-7); He openly declared His Kingship that day and set the stage for His ultimate triumph. He would become their hero, much more than they could ever know or hope to expect, but His kingdom was not of this world. His reign would save them from a far greater power than the political one they believed was oppressing them; and to fight this enemy would not require an army, instead victory would come through His sacrifice and death (reference Isaiah 52:13-53:12). The greatest rule He would achieve would be within the human heart!

While He was on earth Jesus revealed to the world the love of the Father. He did not come to reveal what He was going to do, He simply came to tell the world who He is; in doing so He revealed to us how very much we need to depend on God. Throughout our forty day journey we

have witnessed Jesus presenting one piece of evidence after another that He is indeed the Christ, the Son of God. He has revealed Himself as our Bread of Life, the Light of the world, the Gate for the sheep, the Good Shepherd, the Resurrection and the Life, and the Way and the Truth and the Life. Through every page of Scripture He has touched our heart and proved Himself faithful and true; He is indeed all that we could possibly want or need. In His day, however, the religious leaders rejected His claims even though they knew the Word of God. The Lord used their blindness to fulfill His greater kingdom plan; He even used their own words to testify to the reason He had come: **"Look how the whole world has gone after Him!"** (John 12:19b).

Jesus Christ came into the world to save all who would believe in Him. He willingly and obediently laid down His life as our sacrificial Lamb so we would not have to suffer the penalty that our sin demands. He gave up everything that we might have everything - salvation, forgiveness of sin, freedom from the shackles of sin and death, and eternal life with Him. All that is required is for us to believe in Him. And once we do, we, in turn, are to lay down our life for Him. It's not really a fair exchange - our weakness for His strength; but we must become less, so He can become great (reference John 3:30)! **There is no greater message that the world will ever know than Jesus Christ and Him crucified.** We are called to proclaim a personal redeemer, because, as we have found as we have dined with Him, only Jesus can quench the hunger and thirst of the human soul. There are many who are dying in a vast desert of sin and God wants to use us to pour His life-giving water to refresh their troubled souls.

God's purpose in coming has been to make us one with Himself. It is in that deep place of communion of God that we lose ourselves and find Him; and once we come to the end of ourselves we become a useful vessel ready to be filled to accomplish His kingdom plan. The level to which He can use us publically depends greatly upon our private time of communion with Him. Our intimacy with God should incite in others a holy jealousy that is meant to lead them to Christ and bring Him all the glory, not us. It has been said that if we draw near to the cross we will never sleep. May we commit this year of jubilee to being more watchful and awake; to use our time to seek deeper communion with God; to sit at His banqueting table each day and feast upon His goodness as we fill up on His Word; to use what we have been nourished with to feed another hungry soul; to pray more fervently and frequently to move His mighty hand; and live our lives in holiness and humility to bring glory to His name! Proclaim Jesus Christ crucified, glorified - and coming! He is our message and we must share Him with the world...for *"it's only good news if it gets there on time!"**

**"...there is nothing more natural, beautiful, and blessed
than to be nothing, so that God may be all."
- Andrew Murray.**

*quote from Carl F.H. Henry

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-40

We will experience true victory when we fully embrace Jesus Christ and his work on the cross. The message that will revolutionize and radically transform the world is found in the power of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the greatest revolutionary the world has ever known, but He did so in a way that seemed foolish in the eyes of man (reference 1 Corinthians 1:18-31). He revealed, through His sacrifice, the most excellent way to accomplish His work - the way of love! And there is not greater love than this, than to lay down your life for a friend (reference John 15:13). This is the path we have been called to walk, and we have no greater Friend than Jesus Christ, who spared not His own life that we might have His - we should be honored to lay our life down to bring glory and honor to His name!

The Lord has been showing us these past forty days that we have all the power we need to revolutionize the world. He has provided us His Holy Spirit of the Lord, of Godly Wisdom, of Heavenly Understanding, of Perfect Counsel, of Divine Might, and of Complete Knowledge, to lead us into all truth so we can proclaim His power, presence, and peace to the world. Jesus deposited His life within us so we can breathe His life into the spiritually dead. The gifts He has given us through His Holy Spirit are to be used to build up and bring nourishment to His Body so they can be equipped with power to raise up the dead and decaying bones of the world.

***"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts,
especially the gift of prophecy...everyone who prophesies
speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.
Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts,
try to excel in gifts that build up the church."
(1 Corinthians 14:1, 3, 12)***

Paul expressed that we should desire those gifts that build up the Body of Christ, the church. Prophecy is a gift that edifies and encourages the Body. The gift of tongues is useful for worship, and while the person is being edified themselves, they are not edifying the church (reference 1 Corinthians 14:4). Communication is key in any relationship. Jesus came to re-establish the broken lines of communion and communication with us and the Father because our dependence upon Him is vital to the life of the Body. The deeper our communion with the Lord, the greater our ability to communicate His truth with others. The message of the cross may seem foolish to the unbelieving world, but to the saved it is the power and wisdom of God. We need His wisdom to walk in this world and to win the battles that are bent on destroying His Word and His work. If we don't have clarity and understanding of His Word we will not be able to present His message to those who need to hear it. We must know the Word so we can use it to strengthen and grow the Body of Christ and our spiritual gifts are given to us to help us to just that.

***"If the trumpet does not sound a clear call,
who will get ready for battle?"
(v.8)***

Trumpets were used in the Old Testament as signals for calling the community to gather together, to celebrate festivals, to signal for the camps to set out, or to assemble the troops for battle (reference Numbers 10:1-10). The trumpets were sounded for order and discipline, and it was essential, not only, that the proper signal be made, but, also, that the people be prepared to hear the signal and respond obediently when it came. Today, the church has come under the influence of a divisive spirit and many false prophets have found their way in and have distorted the Word of God. It is essential, now, more than ever, that we know the Scriptures. The greatest way to determine a counterfeit is to know the real thing. We must study and show ourselves as workman approved so we will be prepared to refute any lie that sets itself up against God's holy truth (reference 2 Timothy 2:14-18). ***"If you don't stand firm in your faith, you will not stand at all"*** (Isaiah 7:9b).

Are you encouraged, dear saint, and more determined than ever, to be absolutely and entirely for Him and for Him alone? What we have found in Christ is all we will ever need, but we must not forget that what He has deposited in and entrusted with us is to nourish the rest of His Body and to be shared with the lost world. May the message of the cross be the trumpet call upon our lips and may our lives be a resounding signal for the troops to assemble and be prepared for the king of glory to come in. This time our conquering King will arrive in all His glory and we will have the privilege of being there with Him (reference Revelation 19:11-16). May we lay down our lives from this point forward and live our lives for Him - it's His life we are living after all for we have been crucified with Him! Your journey isn't ending, it's just beginning; be encouraged He is always with you and keep walking faithfully with Him!

***"The kingdom of the world has become
the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,
and He will reign for ever and ever."
(Revelation 11:15b)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Psalm 47

The Old Testament Scriptures prepare the way for the God of His chosen nation, Israel, to become the God of all the nations. ***"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth"*** (Psalm 46:10). This is not a hopeful refrain, it is the promise of God. We find the response to this well-known prayer in our last song of praise for our 40 day Crucified journey; Psalm 47 celebrates the universal reign of Israel's God. With their praise, all of Israel rejoices in the glorious victory they have received without their even having to fight a battle. This Psalm joyfully celebrates the victory that their powerful God, Jehovah, has achieved for them, as all the people join in the praises of their triumphant King!

The greatest victory God achieved for the world came at the place some would consider His greatest defeat and tragedy - the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. ***"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God"*** (1 Corinthians 1:18). Our conquering King suffered humiliation and shame as a Lamb led to the slaughter to save mankind from a war we could never have any hope of winning against this world and the devil (reference Colossians 2:15). When Jesus entered Jerusalem, on that lowly donkey, the people shouted "Hosanna!" to the king, hoping He would set up His kingdom and save them from the rule of Rome, just as God had done for Israel centuries before under Pharaoh's oppressive hand (reference Exodus 3:7-10). Though they would not understand or see it, Jesus had, indeed, come to set up His kingdom, but it would not be done in the ways of man. God's ways are not our ways, and though we may not understand, the way He works through suffering and death achieves for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all (reference 2 Corinthians 4:17).

The week before us is the Most Holy Week, Jesus' final week before He went to the cross to die for the sins of the world. Praise God for this wondrous reminder each year of God's great sacrifice for man and the extraordinary victory over sin and death that was achieved for us through the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ! **"Sing to the LORD, you saints of His; praise His holy name"** (Psalm 30:4). May our lives be a reflection of the victory we have in Christ, no matter what trials come our way, so the whole world will see through us the glory of the risen Lord, and come to receive His salvation and exalt His name! May the trumpet call of the Church be this: **to resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified** (1 Corinthians 2:2)! There is no higher, greater, or more nobler pursuit than the privilege of knowing Christ intimately and sharing Him with the others. May we make every effort, from this point forward, to use the time we have been given to make our relationship with Him our greatest priority - by spending each day in His Word and in prayer - and sharing Him with others as we fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ and become His witnesses to the lost world. Be blessed as you continue your journey with the Lord - He loves to have you walk with Him and delights to show you more! **"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"** (Revelation 7:12).

***"Clap your hands, all you nations;
shout to God with cries of joy.
How awesome is the LORD Most High,
the great King over all the earth!
He subdued nations under us, peoples under our feet.
He chose our inheritance for us,
the pride of Jacob, whom He loved.
God has ascended amid shouts of joy,
the LORD amid the sounding of trumpets.
Sing praises to God, sing praises;
sing praises to our King, sing praises.
For God is the King of all the earth;
sing to Him a psalm of praise.
God reigns over the nations;
God is seated on His holy throne.
The nobles of the nations assemble
as the people of the God of Abraham,
for the kings of the earth belong to God;
He is greatly exalted."
(Psalm 47:1-9)***

***Heavenly Father,
Thank You for this intimate time I have spent
with You these past 40 days - there is no place I would rather be,
and I don't want what I have found in You to ever end.
Thank You for the tender way You show Yourself to me each day.
May I have greater courage and obedience
to take all that I have learned and gleaned from You***

to share Your glorious truth with others You have
 brought across my path.
 May Jesus Christ, and Him Crucified,
 be the only message on my lips,
 until the whole world hears and knows
 what a wondrous God You are!
 "I will praise You, O LORD, with all my heart;
 I will tell of all Your wonders.
 I will be glad and rejoice in You;
 I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High."
 (Psalm 9: 1,2)
 "The LORD is my strength and my song;
 He has become my salvation.
 He is my God, and I will praise Him,
 my father's God, and I will exalt Him."
 (Exodus 15:2)
 "The LORD lives! Praise be to my Rock!
 Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior!
 (2 Samuel 22:47)
 "I will praise You as long as I live,
 and in Your name I will lift up my hands."
 (Psalm 63:4)
 "Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
 Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious!"
 (Psalm 66: 1,2)
 "Praise our God, O peoples, let the sound of His praise be heard."
 (Psalm 66:8)
 "I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart;
 I will glorify Your name forever."
 (Psalm 86:12)
 "Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor
 and power and strength
 be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"
 (Revelation 7:12)
 In Jesus' Highly Exalted and Glorious Name, I pray. Amen.

Our 40 day journey has not ended.
 We have 7 more days to go.
 (This was originally purposed during the Most Holy Week
 leading up to the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ)
 See "From Crucified to Glorified - The Final Seven" below – enjoy the additional feast!

From CRUCIFIED to GLORIFIED - The Final Seven

***"Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people
and your holy city to finish transgression,
to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness,
to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision
and....
(Daniel 9:24)***

The Final Seven - Day 1:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:1-4

Good Morning, Beloved Saint! You may have not been expecting today's email, but once we've experienced that place of deep communion with God, we find that nothing else can satisfy, nothing else compares, nothing else is as desirable as being in fellowship with our First Love (Psalm 34:8; Revelation 2:4); and we never want it to end. We've just walked with the Lord these past forty days and He has confirmed to us, throughout this journey, the depths He will go to show us how much He loves us and we have fallen more deeply in love with Him. Our Lord wants us to know Him; to know that He is all that we need, and to know the value and importance of becoming one with Him as He, Himself, is with the Father. This "abiding" relationship is the key to our successfully walking out the new life that we have found in Christ Jesus at the moment of salvation. His life has been deposited in us and we now have the divine privilege of sharing this new life with Him, but we also have the great responsibility to abide, daily, in Christ. May we never miss a day to spend time with Him in His Word and prayer.

***"Remain in Me, and I will remain in you."
(John 15:4a)***

When we began our forty day Crucified journey, the path was laid out for us to walk through the seven self-descriptions of Christ, the seven-fold Spirit of God, and the seven-fold attributes of Perfect Praise, as we feasted with Him at His banqueting table each day. Unfortunately, our forty day journey only lasted six weeks (how quickly the time went by!); how fortunate it is, however, that we find ourselves at the beginning of the Most Holy Week and have an even greater opportunity to now join with Jesus during the most critical week of His earthly ministry. There is still so much He wants us to know and He is inviting us to tarry a little while longer with Him. This is the week that changed human history. This is the week that transformed our own personal lives for all eternity. This is the week that our Lord was not only crucified, but glorified!

***"Now is the Son of Man glorified
and God is glorified in Him."
(John 13:31)***

When Jesus was making the final preparations to go to the cross to complete the mission God had sent Him to do **He did not call it "crucified," instead He called it "Glorified!"** (reference John 13:31). Jesus knew the pain and suffering that He would have to endure for the sins of

mankind as well as the separation from the Father that He would have to bear, but He did not allow Himself to dwell on the difficult circumstances in front of Him, rather He focused on the joy that would be the result of this great trial. **"...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God"** (Hebrews 12:2b). His suffering brought (and bought) us salvation. Jesus was not a victim, He is a Victor! The cross was not a tragedy, it is a triumph! **"It is for God's glory so that God's Son may be glorified through it"** (John 11:4b).

***"I am the True Vine."
(John 15:1a)***

If there is one message the Lord wanted to get across before He left the earth, it was this: remain in Him. This picture that Jesus provides us of the vine and the branches is similar to that of the Head and the Body. The living relationship we have with Him is totally dependent upon us being connected to Him. The life we live is not our own; we must remain in Him for His life in us to continue to grow. A part from Christ we have no life in us. He is the Vine who provides all the power and strength we need to walk this Christian life productively and powerfully. Abiding in Christ is not as automatic as it may seem; just like any other relationship that is important to us, we must nurture and cultivate it for it to produce the deep intimacy we want to achieve. Learning to depend on the Lord is a discipline that must be learned, and sometimes it is discipline the Lord uses to grow us to a place of deeper dependence upon Him.

***"...My Father is the Gardener.
He cuts off every branch that bears no fruit,
while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes
so that it will be even more fruitful."
(John 15:1b-2)***

Branches do not produce life on their own. They cannot bear fruit apart from the vine, therefore it is vital that they remain connected to the vine. Our connection to the Lord is necessary to living a productive and fruitful Christian life. The life blood of Christ runs through us through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. He helps us to remain connected to the Lord through prayer and the Word, and also convicts us and leads us to confess any known sin that might hinder our connection to Him. Just as a tree that is meant to bear fruit must be pruned to become more fruitful, we also will experience pruning ("cleaning") in our life. The Lord will remove anything in the life of His Body that is extracting strength and keeping it from being fruitful and productive. He cuts off anything that might breed disease and cause His body to become sick and weak, and He removes any dead weight that is draining the body of life. The results of His pruning in our life will result in a more productive and fruitful life that will bring health to the body and glory to God! The process may be painful, but the results are worth the pain. **"No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it"** (Hebrews 12:11). May we never fail to abide in the Lord, and trust that He will never fail us when the pruning begins!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 21:18-19

Jesus had entered the city of Jerusalem for the final week of His earthly ministry. On Sunday He received a hero's welcome and allowed their praises to declare to the people that He is indeed the Son of God and the King of Israel. On His way back to the city on Monday He continued His teaching with His disciples as He took notice of a fig tree which had no fruit. **"Early in the morning, as He was on His way back to the city, He was hungry. Seeing a fig tree by the road, He went up to it but found nothing on it except leaves"** (v. 18-19a). The tree was alive, but it produced no fruit. It offered nothing of what it was created to do. Instead of giving the tree life, and allowing it to yield fruit, Jesus cursed the tree for taking up necessary space and took its life away. **"May you never bear fruit again!"** (v.19b).

***"The Lord will judge His people.
It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."
(Hebrews 10:30b, 31)***

Jesus is our Vine who gives us life and allows us to produce fruit. We have learned that He will take whatever measures necessary to make sure we bear His fruit; in quantity and quality! As Jesus, stood outside the city of Jerusalem, He used the fig tree to illustrate the judgment that would come to those who wasted His goodness and refused to produce the fruit of a godly life. He had already turned the tables in the temple for allowing the place where His glory was to dwell to become a marketplace for sin (reference Matthew 21:12-13). The privileges they had been given were being used to profit themselves, instead of glorifying God. The Lord will not allow us to waste the precious life He has given us, or let us rob others of that life He desires for them to have. We are His temple, the place where His glory dwells, but we must be holy for His presence to dwell there.

***"Be holy, because I am holy."
(Leviticus 11:44, 45)***

Our Lord knows that holiness can only come from Him. We have no other way of achieving the holy life than to receive it from Him. **Jesus went to the cross because it is only through forgiveness that we can become a holy man!** We cannot mandate holiness - it can only come from God; nor can we expect people to bear fruit that is good and holy if they aren't connected to God. That is why it is essential, as believers, that we abide daily in the Lord, so we can produce fruit that will be readily available to feed a spiritually hungry world. **"Produce fruit in keeping with repentance"** (Matthew 3:8).

The Spirit of Holy Reverence for the Father has been given to us to live a life of holiness in godly fear. As we learn to abide in Him more deeply a loving reference for the Lord will develop and we will grow to accept His discipline and pruning, and learn to trust Him more and more. **"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline"** (Proverbs 1:7). The world sees the cross as foolishness, but to us who are being saved it is the wisdom and power of God (reference 1 Corinthians 1:18, 24). May we trust Him for the work He wants to do in us and the fruit He desires to produce in us and submit to His pruning so He can accomplish His work in us. May we allow Him to transform us into a holy vessel through which He can be glorified!

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read John 17:1-5

As we continue our journey with the Lord we realize that we must depend more and more upon His strength and not ours. When we received His gift of salvation by faith we exchanged our weakness for His strength and He deposited His Holy Spirit of power within us so we could remain connected to Him and experience communion with Him daily. Throughout the Scriptures there are many prayers of faithful saints and warriors who depended whole-heartedly on God for their strength as they faced the trials and difficulties of the world while bringing glory to God. As we come to the end of our day, and welcome this extraordinary week before us, let us praise God for the flow of strength He pours into our lives and recognize that it is in weakness that we find our greatest strength (reference 2 Corinthians 12:10). May we remain connected to Him - He is all the strength we need!

Today we will join the Lord as He prays to the Father in John 17:

***"Father, the time has come.
Glorify Your Son, that Your Son may glorify You.
For You granted Him authority over all people
that He might give eternal life to all those You have given Him.
Now this is eternal life: that they may know You,
the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent.
I have brought You glory on earth by completing the work You gave me to do.
And now, Father, glorify Me in Your presence with the glory
I had with You before the world began."
(John 17:1-5)***

***Heavenly Father,
"O my Strength, I sing praise to You;
You, O God, are my fortress, my loving God."
(Psalm 59:17)
Thank You for every opportunity You give
me to spend this time with You.
I'm so grateful for these divine appointments
where I can learn to depend more fully on You.
Give me strength in my weakness as
I face Your pruning shears and trust that
You are not giving me more than I can possibly bear.
May the words I speak, be only yours, and the service
I do be in Your strength, so that in all things Your name
may be praised through Jesus Christ our Lord.
May You receive all the glory and the power***

**for ever and ever.
(1 Peter 4:11)
In Jesus' Name. Amen.**

The Final Seven - Day 2:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:5-6

Jesus brought glory to the Father by completing the work He was called to do. The love of the Father, and accomplishing His will, was the soul focus of Jesus' life and ministry. He exemplified for us the way we are to live our lives now that His life blood flows through us. He is glorified in us when we remain in Him and allow Him to work in and through our lives. The life we now live, from the moment of salvation, is not our own. We have been separated and set apart to be His very own so He can do with us however He pleases. It should please us to let Him work through us, for He knows what is best to bless our lives, and what will bring glorify to His name.

***"I am the Vine; you are the branches.
If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit;
apart from Me you can do nothing."
(John 15:5)***

We bring glory to the Lord by abiding in Him and bearing good fruit. Before we came to believe in Christ we were separated from the Father and had no possibility of bearing His fruit. Now that we are His, His life flows through us and enables us to produce the fruit that will prove, not only, that we are His, but that we are alive in Him; for where there is fruit, there is life. It is to God's glory that we bear fruit, because He wants to use us to feed this spiritually starved world with His truth so they may come to believe in Him just as we have come to believe in Him. In yesterday's devotional, Jesus was hungry and wanted to eat, but the fig tree offered Him no sustenance (reference Matthew 21:18-19). As we live and walk in this world, there will be many people who the Lord will bring across our path who He expects us to nourish with His truth, but if we aren't bearing His fruit they will walk away empty handed and look elsewhere for a way to be satisfied. And this will not please the Lord.

***"If anyone does not remain in Me,
he is like a branch that is thrown away and withers;
such branches are picked up,
thrown into the fire and burned."
(John 15:6)***

Jesus showed His disappointment for the fig tree not bearing fruit as it should by cursing it and causing it to wither. So too is the judgment that awaits those who are not branches of the true Vine and who do not bear fruit. The sustenance we need each day comes from the connection we have with the Lord as He allows His life to flow from Him to us. The fruit that is produced out

of that living relationship is not fruit that we eat, but rather fruit that will feed a spiritually hungry world; with the truth of His words that we speak and the works of His service that we do. **"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"** (Galatians 5:22-23).

***"A good tree cannot bear bad fruit,
and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit.
Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down
and thrown into the fire.
Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them."
(Matthew 7:18-19)***

When we remain in Christ, as He remains in us, the fruit that is produced out of that vital union is spiritual fruit. The more we remain in Him and allow Him to work in us the greater the produce that we bear. As we learned yesterday, it is essential that our Master Gardener prunes us so what we have to offer the world is of the greatest quality; so the hungry are not just being fed, but are also getting the finest fare. When we feast at the table of the King He gives us His very best, and, as His children, He expects us, in turn, to do the same as we share Him with the rest of the world. May we take the necessary steps each day to cultivate this precious life that dwells inside of us so we will be a planting of the Lord in the garden of the King, and bear His royal fruit that will satisfy a starving world (reference Psalm 34:8).

***"They will be called oaks of righteousness,
a planting of the LORD
for the display of His splendor."
(Isaiah 61:3b)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 23:1-39

When Jesus was hungry He found nothing to satisfy Him; the fig tree that was in His path was not bearing what it naturally should. Just as a fig tree is created to produce figs, so, too, is the believer meant to produce spiritual fruit. We have been created by God for His pleasure and for the purpose of bringing Him glory. When our Lord is hungry, we are the food that He eats. **"For the LORD's portion is His people"** (Deuteronomy 32:9a). Our Lord finds satisfaction from our worship of and dependence upon Him. It is a shameful thing, to not only waste the opportunity we have each day to show up at His table to eat His spiritual food and be nourished and satisfied, but, also, to rob Him of the food that He longs to eat - fellowship with the ones He dearly loves!

***"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!
You shut the kingdom of heaven in men's faces.
You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to."
(Matthew 23:13-14)***

In His last public message, Jesus condemned the religious leaders for bearing false fruit. The

Pharisees had power, privilege and authority, but they abused it to promote themselves instead of proclaiming the truth of God and meeting the needs of the people. Instead of being set apart for God's purposes they set themselves apart from the people to line their own purses. Their hypocrisy was driving the people further away from God and Jesus had come to set them straight. **"But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach"** (Matthew 23:3).

***"You brood of vipers!
Who warned you to flee the coming wrath?
Produce fruit in keeping with repentance.
The ax is already at the root of the trees,
and every tree that does not produce good fruit
will be cut down and thrown into the fire."
(Matthew 3:7b, 8, 10)***

God has saved us and sanctified us so we will be set apart, but that does not mean our connection to Christ is meant to disconnect us from the world. On the contrary, we are to be His conduits of grace to the world, therefore essential that we abide in Him completely so His grace can flow freely through us. The Pharisees had clogged up the lines with their self-righteousness. They had imposed heavy burdens upon the people, and instead of leading them to freedom in Christ, they made it impossible for them to get to Him. They were robbing all the honor and glory that belonged to God and keeping it for themselves. If they bore any fruit at all it was false and rotten fruit that only starved the people and kept them dependent upon them instead of God. They were sanctimonious leaders who were hindering the work of God.

Jesus died on the cross to save us and to consecrate us into His service. Consecration is the human side of holiness, while Sanctification is the divine side of holiness. Sanctify means to be "set apart for sacred use" or "make holy." Yesterday we learned that only the forgiven man is a holy man. We cannot be holy apart from Christ. He set us apart for the purpose of making us holy. **"...therefore be holy, because I am holy"** (Leviticus 11:45b). When we abide in Him His life blood flows through us and transforms us over time to become more like Him. Our Master Gardener takes His time to make us into a beautiful and fruitful planting that will attract the world to Him. May we submit with Holy Reverence for the Father, to His masterful hand, and allow Him to not only do the work necessary in our lives to make us more like Him, but also allow Him to delight in, and find satisfaction in us, by **"living a life worthy of the Lord and pleasing Him in every way; bearing fruit in every good work, and growing in the knowledge of the God"** (Colossians 1:10). Let Him continue the work He started so we will be complete in Him and that He can look upon His work and be glorified in us (reference Philippians 1:6)!

***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation,
a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him
who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light."
(1 Peter 2:9)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read John 17:6-19

As we join Jesus in His intercessory prayer for His disciples He reveals the special interest He has for those who believe in Him. A common thread that runs through the message Jesus was trying to get across in our journey over the past forty plus days has been the difference between those who are His and those who are not. In His farewell prayer, Jesus commends His "special" ones to the Father and asks for His protective and loving hand to remain on them as they remain in Him. Jesus would not remain in the world in His present state any longer, but He would remain in His people so that they, too, would not "remain" in the world, but rather remain in Him. We have been given all of the God's strength, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, the fervent intercessory prayer of the Son, and the tender watchful care and answered prayer of the Father to stay connected to the Vine. There's nothing that can disconnect us from that vital Source, we are attached to Him securely, so let us draw from His strength and remain in Him. Feast on these words that our Savior prayed so that we would never fall from His mighty hand. Praise God that we never have to doubt or fear that we are His. Offer Him the praise and worship He deserves.

***"I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world.
They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your Word.
Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You.
For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them.
They knew with certainty that I came from You,
and they believed that You sent Me. I pray for them.
I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me,
for they are Yours. All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine.
And glory has come to Me through them.
I will remain in the world no longer, but I am coming to You.
Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name -
the name You gave Me - so they may be one as We are one.
While I was with them, I protected them and kept them safe
by that name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one
doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.
I am coming to You now, but I say these things while I am still in the world,
so that they may have the full measure of My joy within them.
I have given them Your Word and the world has hated them,
for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.
My prayer is not that You take them out of the world but that You
protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it.
Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth.
As You sent Me into the world, I have sent them into the world.
For them I sanctify Myself, that they too may be truly sanctified."
(John 17:6-19)***

*Heavenly Father,
"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual
blessing in Christ...to the praise of His glorious grace,
which He has freely given us in the One He loves...In order that we,
who were first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory."
(Ephesians 1:3, 6, 12)*

*Thank You for connecting me to You so Your life blood can
continually flow and strengthen me to do the things You have
called me to do. How blessed I am to know that
You are praying for me so that I walk securely each day
knowing Your hand is protecting me and keeping me close to You.
May my life bring glory and honor to Your name as
I surrender to Your tender hand to do the necessary work
to make me more like You; so that I can live the holy
and set apart life that You have chosen for me
and grow to maturity; that my life may bear good fruit that
will bless and feed a hungry world desperately in need of You.
" Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God
a sacrifice of praise - the fruit of lips that confess His name.
And not forget to do good and share with others,
for with such sacrifices [You] are pleased."
(Hebrews 13:15-16)
Find pleasure in my life each and every day
as I seek to give my best to You by remaining
in Your will and glorifying Your Holy Name.
Be glorified, I pray. In Jesus' Name. Amen.*

The Final Seven - Day 3:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:7-8

Jesus used the word "abide" ("remain") eleven times in the explanation of this, the seventh of His self-descriptive "I am" statements: **"I am the true Vine"** (reference John 15:1-11). To "abide" means to live, or to dwell; the Greek word means "to stay in expectancy." To expound on what it means to abide in Christ then, one could say that in doing so, we allow the life of Christ to live inside of us so much so that we live in constant anticipation of what He is doing in and through us. The evidence that His life is within us, and that He is indeed working in us, is the presence and production of His spiritual fruit in our lives (reference Galatians 5:22-23). In addition, a believer who is abiding in Christ, is a life that is alive and is no stranger to the painful pruner's shears, but whose life is also evidenced by answered prayer.

"If you remain in Me and My words remain in you,

***ask whatever you wish, and it will be given to you.
This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit,
showing yourselves to be My disciples."
(John 15:7-8)***

The Lord wants living, loving, and productive disciples. He went to the cross and was crucified, and He died and was buried; but He didn't stay in the grave, no, He was Resurrected from the dead and our Savior is alive! That Resurrection life, that cost Him heavens greatest price, is the life He has deposited within us and now we can truly live. We have no excuse for a weak, powerless, and lifeless existence. We, who have believed, have the glory of God dwelling inside us and our lives are now meant to be used for His glory. Just as a branch draws life from the main trunk of the tree, so we are to draw life each day from our true Vine. We do this by becoming intentional about spending time with the Lord in His Word and in prayer each day, and staying away from worldly enticements that would only distract us and keep us away from Him. *"The Word of God and prayer are inseparable - the power of the one is dependent upon the presence of the other."*

***"See that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you.
If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father.
And this is what He promised us - even eternal life.
I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead
you astray. As for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you,
and you do not need anyone to teach you. But as His anointing teaches
you about all things and as that anointing is real, not counterfeit -
just as it has taught you, remain in Him."
(1 John 2:24-27)***

One of the greatest ways we cultivate and produce spiritual fruit that will nourish and bless others is through the discipline of prayer. Prayer is our greatest privilege as children of God. It is our native language. It is the language of love, because it connects us to the One Who is love and who does all things through love. We show our love to others in the most powerful and productive way through prayer. Prayer is the way we communicate with God and it is the way He works through us to bless others. We are to be conduits of His grace to the world and when we keep our lives free from sin and obediently abide in Him the channel of His grace is free to flow the abundance of heaven's spiritual wealth upon those He wants to touch and bless the most.

When Moses lifted his hands up to heaven the Israelites were winning the battle before them. As long as his hands were lifted up in an appeal to God for His help the people were enabled to fight the battle and experience victory (reference Exodus 17:11). Note also that Moses did not stand in that posture of prayer alone, he had two friends who stood with him and supported him. Our private personal communion with God in His Word and in prayer will greatly determine the measure of our effectiveness for His kingdom in the public realm, and the time we spend in corporate prayer with other believers will only help to multiply the work that is done. **"For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them"** (Matthew 18:20). Jesus set for us the greatest example for One who's life and ministry was absolutely dependent upon prayer, because He was totally dependent upon the Father. May we follow His lead that our lives, devoted to God and prayer, would be an example that others would want to follow. This is to the Father's glory. May we glorify His name by lifting it up daily in prayer!

***"If My people, who are called by My name,
will humble themselves in prayer and seek My face
and turn from their wicked ways , then I will hear from heaven
and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."
(2 Chronicles 7:14)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Rest in Him

During the week of Jesus' Passion He held to a very specific schedule to accomplish the will of the Father. On Wednesday, however the Scriptures do not mention this day or what is was He did. The prior week before entering Jerusalem He went to Bethany, as He was known to do, to find rest and fellowship with His friends. It is possible, and quite probable, because of the example He set, that our Lord used this day to spend time with the Father in prayer, for the next few days would prove to be the most extraordinary, excruciating, impossible days in all of human history. His faithfulness, however, would reveal the glory of God!

Yesterday, we learned that when the Lord is hungry, the devotion and worship of His people is the food that satisfies Him (reference Deuteronomy 32:9a). Today we will follow Jesus' example and devote this afternoon to prayer and give the Lord what He desires most - and what He died to achieve - fellowship with the ones He loves! As you pray, recognize that He has already given you everything you need, express your gratitude to Him for all He has done in your life and ask Him to show you what it is that you are holding back from Him and offer it up as a sacrifice of praise and a commitment to living a life more fully surrendered and devoted to Him. Enjoy this time of solitude and rest in the presence of God Most High!

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read John 17:20-26

At the end of Jesus' farewell prayer He turns His attention to all those who would believe as a result of His followers being sanctified to Him. His prayer continued to emphasize the unity of His people, with the relationship between Him and the Father being the high and holy standard we are to follow. We are to be God's witnesses to the world, and to the degree to which Christians live in harmony and unity will determine the world's acceptance or rejection of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are all individual branches abiding in the True Vine; when we are healthy and productive we, together, provide a beautiful picture of God's Glory to the world, and they will desire the food we have to offer them to eat. May we not hold anything back from them, but share from our bounty so they can taste and see how good the Lord is (reference Psalm 34:8a); and may we not hold anything of ourselves back from God so He can enjoy His portion and receive the glory He deserves. ***"They are the shoot I have planted, the work of My***

hands, for the display of My splendor" (Isaiah 60:21b). This evening may we rest in God's strength as we lift up our hearts and lips in adoration and praise; may everything we say and do bring blessing to others and bring glory to His name.

"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. May they be brought to complete unity to

let the world know that You sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.

***Father, I want those You have given Me to be with Me where I am,
and to see My glory, the glory You have given Me because You loved Me
before the creation of the world. Righteous Father, through the world does
not know You, I know You, and they know that You have sent Me.***

***I have made You known to them, and will continue to make You known
in order that the love You have for Me may be in them and
that I Myself may be in them."***

(John 17:20-26)

Heavenly Father,

***"Blessed be Your glorious name,
and may it be exalted above all blessing and praise."***

(Nehemiah 9:5b)

"I will sing for the One I love a song about His vineyard."

(Isaiah 5:1a)

***Every day that I awaken I wait expectantly
upon You to show me what it is You have
to share with me and what it is You have for me to do.***

***Thank You for the privilege to be able
to approach Your throne and make
my requests knowing You have an answer
already prepared. May I spend more
days just worshiping You so You can have
Your fill of me, because that is ultimately
all that You desire. I want my life to reflect
the beauty of who You are and I want
the world to see and know how wonderful You are.***

May the name of Jesus Christ be glorified in everything I do and say.

***"The Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious,
and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory
of the survivors of Israel."***

(Isaiah 4:2)

***May we be a united and fruitful tree that will bring glory
and honor to You!***

In Jesus' Name. Amen.

The Final Seven - Day 4:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:9-12

Jesus had been explaining to His disciples, through the illustration of the Vine and the branches, the importance of abiding in Him to experience the abundant and fruitful life that He has purposed and planned for them. Now, He moves to the deeper aspect of that union; His disciples are called not just to "remain in Him," but to "remain in His love" (v.9). Jesus Christ died on the cross for our sins and the moment we believed we received His life within us, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit; now that relationship must grow and be nurtured. Just as a marriage does not grow naturally on its' own the moment a couple is joined together as one flesh, instead their union remains strong when they cultivate a deeper communion through love and devotion towards one another; so, too, our relationship to our True Vine is made stronger and more fruitful when our connection is maintained through love and obedience.

***"We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands.
But if anyone obeys His word, God's love is truly made complete in him."
(1 John 2:5a)***

The outgrowth of our love relationship with the Lord will create a deeper desire for obedience to Him, and a growing love for other people. ***"...if we love one another, God lives in us and His love is made complete in us"*** (1 John 4:12b). A tree that bears fruit is only valuable if its fruit is being used to feed and nourish others. Fruit that ripens and falls to the ground only to rot away is of little use to others. Our union with Christ is meant to bless others. The life we draw from Him each day is not just meant to keep us walking through this life until we get to our eternal destination; we have been connected to the Lord for the purpose of sharing His life and love with others. ***"This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out His commands. This is love for God: to obey His commands"*** (1 John 5:2-3a).

Our communion with the Lord enables us to love and care for others. As we grow in our love relationship with the Lord, through the enabling power and presence of the Holy Spirit, there is a natural outgrowth of love for the things He loves, namely people; and a desire for others to experience that same depth of love and communion with the Lord. ***"And His commands are not burdensome"*** (1 John 5:3b). We cannot love others the way the Lord expects or intends us to love them apart from the love of the Father. God is love; apart from Him we don't know what true love is, nor so we have the ability to love as He loves. ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control"*** (Galatians 5:22-23a). This fruit can only be produced in a life that is connected to Christ; anything produced outside of that union is artificial, unsatisfying, and will not last.

Jesus calls us to follow His example of love. ***"My command is this: love each other as I have loved you"*** (John 15:12). Our obedience to His command is simply to "remain in His love" and allow Him to do the work in us which will produce the fruit that will lead others to *"taste and see how good God is."* It is vital, therefore, that we remain in the Lord and experience deeper

communion with Him each and every day, so the fruit of our union with Him will be evident to others and leave a good taste in their mouths rather than add to the tastelessness that is already so prevalent in the world. May we not be just hearers of His Word, but doers also (reference James 1:22), and share with others His fruit, which begins with love, and will endure forever and only continue to grow and multiply as we continue to share it.

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 26:17-30; John 13:1-17

Jesus showed His disciples ***"the full extent of His love"*** (John 13:1b) on Thursday, of the week of His Passion, when He met with them in the Upper Room to observe Passover. The Passover was observed each year to commemorate the Lord's deliverance of Israel out of slavery from Egypt by His mighty hand, and looked forward to the day when the Lamb of God would take away the sins of the world. That evening, in the upper room, Jesus took the bread and the cup from the Passover feast and declared that all was now accomplished, and He inaugurated a new meal to be observed until He comes again - the Lord's Supper (reference 1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

This new meal, that we observe now as "communion," cannot take place if we are defiled by any sin. Our communion with the Lord is dependent upon our keeping ourselves separate and clean from the world (1 Corinthians 11:27-29). Before Jesus, instituted this new meal, He humbled Himself and washed the disciples' feet (reference John 13:2-5) to show them the importance of humility and being clean. At the root of every sin is pride, and if left unchecked will lead to failure. Jesus took this opportunity to show His disciples that just like Him, they are not to be served, but are called to serve others (reference 1 Peter 5:5-6). He demonstrated for them an example of true humility that He expected them to follow; which would become the basis for their life and ministry as they served Him.

***"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant..."
(Philippians 2:5-7a)***

At salvation we were completely bathed in Christ and were joined in union with Him; now that we are His our communion is dependent on our obedience to His commands and willingness to keep our lives free from sin. Our walk with Christ is hindered when we allow ourselves to be polluted by the world, therefore it is necessary to daily "wash our feet" ("confess our sins" (reference 1 John 1:9)) so that we will be clean as we walk in His will and carry His message of forgiveness of sins and salvation to the world. ***"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet"*** (John 11:14).

Jesus provided an unforgettable lesson in humility to His disciples that Thursday; just hours before He would suffer His greatest humiliation and shame, to prepare them for the path they would soon be walking in the world. He washed all their feet, even the one who would betray Him to give Judas one last opportunity to shed his arrogance and pride. After Judas left the room the communion meal was served, for only those who are truly clean can partake of the Lord's Supper

(reference John 6:64-71). The indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives instills in us Holy Reverence for the Father to live a holy and humble life for His glory. May we remain in His love and follow the example He has set for us so we will be richly blessed and become a blessing to others (reference John 13:17).

RESTORE PRAISE!

“Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!” (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise – Read 1 Samuel 2:1-10

In our evening devotional time up to this point thus far we have listened in on one of the greatest prayers ever prayed – the Lord’s Prayer – which Jesus personally prayed to the Father (reference John 17). This intercessory prayer to the Father, for Himself, His disciples, and future believers placed a seal on His farewell address before going to the cross. This extraordinary, powerful, and beautiful prayer was written down for us as a constant reminder of all that Jesus has done for us; it should give us strength, hope and joy in any circumstance we might face knowing that our Savior and Lord continues to pray like this in heaven on our behalf.

As we walk the final leg of this journey with the Lord we turn our attention to some of the most beautiful prayers articulated in Scripture. Jesus expressed that if we remain in His love our joy would be complete. There is no greater expression of pain being turned to joy than that of a mother giving birth and welcoming a new life into the world (reference John 16:21). The Scriptures provide the beautiful words of praise and thanksgiving offered up to the Lord from Hannah, who has just “consecrated [her] firstborn son” to the Lord for His service (reference Exodus 13:2, 13). The establishment of the kingship of Israel would come through her son Samuel, and her prayer is a prophetic prayer of the ultimate kingship that would come through God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Hannah’s joy had truly been made complete, not just because she had finally been blessed with a son, but that God had answered her prayer. The Lord “delivered [her] from disgrace to a position of honor and strength.”

As we join her in her prayer of praise, may we be reminded of all that the Lord has done for us and be willing to lay ourselves down as a sacrifice of love for His greater kingdom purposes. Offer your own testimony of praise to the King for His gracious, benevolent hand, through which He has given you His very best.

***“My heart rejoices in the LORD;
in the LORD my horn is lifted high.
My mouth boasts over my enemies,
for I delight in Your deliverance.
There is no one holy like the LORD;
there is no one besides You; there is no Rock like our God.
Do not keep talking so proudly
or let your mouth speak such arrogance,
for the LORD is a God who knows, and by Him deeds are weighed.
The bows of the warriors are broken,***

*but those who stumble are armed with strength.
 Those who were full hire themselves out for food,
 but those who were hungry hunger no more.
 She who was barren has borne seven children,
 but she who has had many sons pines away.
 The LORD brings death and makes alive;
 He brings down to the grave and raises up.
 The LORD sends poverty and wealth; He humbles and He exalts.
 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;
 He seats them with princes and has them inherit a throne of honor.
 For the foundations of the earth are the LORD's;
 upon them He has set the world.
 He will guard the feet of His saints,
 but the wicked will be silenced in darkness.
 It is not by strength that one prevails;
 those who oppose the LORD will be shattered.
 He will thunder against them from heaven;
 the LORD will judge the ends of the earth.
 He will give strength to His king and exalt the horn of His anointed.”
 (1 Samuel 2:1-10)*

*Heavenly Father,
 So often when we pray we desire and expect an immediate
 answer and grow impatient, like spoiled children do, when
 we don't get what we want when we want it.
 But You, in Your Sovereignty Lord, know exactly what we need,
 and will give it at the exact appointed time which will
 fulfill Your greater kingdom plan.
 Sometimes the pain of waiting is so much like childbirth,
 but how wonderful it is when all that You have
 promised and we have waited for comes forth –
 it is always more than we could ever hope for
 or imagine – You give always give us Your very best.
 Forgive us for being impatient or willing to settle
 for something less just because we don't want
 to suffer the pain of waiting or the pain of trial
 that may be part of Your birthing process.
 Forgive us for the times we ask You for more
 and more and more of everything for ourselves
 and for what will make our life better and more comfortable,
 instead of asking You what You would want from us,
 which would bring You more honor and glory,
 and giving to You more of ourselves.
 You have given us everything we could possibly
 ever want and need – help us to spend our life
 on this earth giving You everything You deserve.*

***Be praise, glory, wisdom, thanks, honor,
power, and strength to Your name forever.
In Jesus' Name. Amen.***

The Final Seven - Day 5:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:13-17

Jesus is not just a man of words, He is a man of action. Everything He has ever spoken, He has backed up with what He has done. He didn't just tell people what to do, He demonstrated it for them. Our Lord does not make understanding His Word or following His will difficult, on the contrary, He has made it simple enough for a child to understand and obey (Matthew 18:3; Luke 10:21). Likewise, our love relationship with the Lord is not meant to be complex, He demonstrated its' simplicity in His own loving reverence to the Father with His daily devotion and dependence upon His Father in prayer and His obedience to following His Father's will. Jesus whittled down how our relationship with Him would work into three simple words: Remain in Me!

We make life far too complex when we try to figure things out on our own. As followers of Jesus Christ, our life is not our own. The life we live is a new life, it is the life of Jesus Christ. We cannot live this life apart from Him; His life is inside of us. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that we remain completely dependent upon Him to experience the fullness and fruitfulness of the life He has deposited within us. Jesus summed up all of His teachings in the upper room when He demonstrated for His disciples the fullness of His love in the humility of a servant as He washed their feet to make them clean: Depend on God, serve others with humility, and keep our lives free from the defilement of sin. In Christ we have been given the master key to a life of happiness and victory, if we will only obey what He has taught as we walk through the pollution and refuse of this world. Ultimately, the path we walk, and the footprints we leave behind, are meant to lead others to Christ.

***"Greater love has no one than this,
that he lay down his life for his friends."
(John 15:13)***

All that we've been asked to do is give up our life for His. Our sinful, decaying, temporal, fleshly human (can we really call it a life?) life, in exchange for His holy, regenerated, eternal, spiritual abundantly full and fruitful life (now that is a life, life!). We wonder why more aren't dying to lay down their deteriorating sinful rags for His glorious garment of salvation? When what we should be asking is why any of us would ever want to put those old rags on again after wearing such exquisite royal attire? There are many who are indeed dying without Christ, and, we, who bear His name and wear His garments, hold the key to their coming to Him. ***"You are My friends if you do what I command...for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you"*** (John 15:14,15b).

Jesus has opened the way for us to enter the throne room of heaven. We are not just privileged guests who have been invited to observe His majesty, we have been invited into an extraordinary relationship with the eternal King of heaven, who has confided in us His deepest secrets

and entrusted us with the keys to His kingdom. ***"I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends..."*** (v.15a). Just as wedding attendants are not given bridal attire to draw attention to themselves, but are meant to give their support to the bridal party, likewise, we, who believe, have been given the most important role as attendants to our King, to support His plans and do all that we have been commanded to help, not to hinder, His kingdom plans. Today, as we reflect on the extraordinary sacrifice our Savior made for us, let us take time to consider what we have done and are doing to support Him and His Kingdom building program. Let us begin today by taking the steps that He did as He walked towards the cross singing the praises of God. Meditate on Psalm 116-118, and rejoice as He did knowing the joy that would follow such extraordinary suffering and death. We have so much to be thankful for! May His praise continually be upon our lips, realizing, that no matter how difficult our trials in this life may get, we will never have to walk the path He had to walk!

***"The bride belongs to the Bridegroom.
The friend who attends the Bridegroom waits and listens for Him,
and is full of joy when he hears the Bridegroom's voice.
That joy is mine, and it is now complete."
(John 3:29)***

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 26:36-27:54

When the disciples left the upper room to walk with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane, where He has been known to go and pray, they had no idea they were walking into a battlefield. Their feet had been washed, their stomachs were full, and now they would lay down to take a nap while their beloved Friend and Teacher went off to suffer alone. This would be just the beginning of His suffering, for within hours, Jesus would face betrayal, arrest, desertion, trials, denial, beatings, mockings, calvary and the cross; and His closest friends and companions would not be there to comfort Him, but would only contribute to His pain.

This afternoon, as we consider some of the greatest injustices in our world and question why the wicked seem to prosper and the innocent suffer, let us reflect on the greatest injustice of all history - the crucifixion of our Lord. He broke no law, committed no crime, and was perfectly sinless and blameless, yet He was betrayed by one of His followers, arrested as a common thief, falsely accused by those willing to break God's law to accomplish their own selfish purposes, denied by one of His closest companions who said he would die for His friend, suffered the flesh on His back being ripped off by metal and bone of the leather scourge, having survived this He was slapped in the face, spat upon, mocked and beaten by a rod, a crown of thorns pressed into His head, and a heavy cross placed upon His bloodied back, and forced to walk the road to calvary. Once there, He was made a spectacle as He was lifted up like a banner on a cross for all the crowds who had come to Jerusalem for Passover to look upon the Lamb that was slain, and instead of repenting they only mocked and ridiculed Him more. And if that were not enough, darkness settled upon the land, as if all of creation were in mourning, as Jesus bore the

weight of all the sin of mankind and suffered the rejection and judgment of the Father. **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"** (Matthew 27:46b).

Beloved, Jesus Christ is the only One who has ever had to utter those words. He spoke them so we would never have to. He suffered all this humiliation, affliction and shame so we would never have to experience the extraordinary pain of being separated from the Father for all eternity. Today is Good Friday, and as we look back at the unimagineable pain and suffering our Savior went through on this day in history we wonder what in the world was good about it. But, to those of us who have come to believe, we know that the cross is where God defeated sin and death, and through the shed blood of Christ, who gave His life for ours, we have the victory, both now and for all eternity! On this day, our Lord achieved the greatest good for all humanity!!

***"But thanks be to God!
He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."
(1 Corinthians 15:57)***

The story does not end here, praise God! We rejoice in God our Savior, that while it may be Friday, Sunday is coming! We are not left to wonder and wander in a Friday world. An even greater victory is just around the corner if we are willing to wait for it. As we weep over the pain and affliction that our Savior suffered on our behalf, let us rejoice in the work that He has accomplished (reference Psalm 30:5b), and be willing to share His victorious message with the world.

***"The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.
I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies,
it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.
The man who loves his life will lose it,
while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.
Whoever serves Me must follow Me;
and where I am, My servant will also be.
My Father will honor the one who serves Me.
Now My heart is troubled, and what shall I say?
'Father, save Me from this hour'?
No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour.
Father, glorify Your name!"
(John 12:23-28)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Luke 1:46-55

Yesterday, we rejoiced with Hannah as she worshiped the Lord for His goodness in answering her prayer and giving her a son who would establish the kingship for Israel. Her song of praise is considered the Magnificat of the Old Testament and foreshadowed the Magnificat of Mary who would later sing the praises of the eternal King, Jesus! We can only imagine the pain that Mary

felt as she watched her Son die on that cross, seeing the promise that God presented to her as a teenager now being fulfilled in the most extraordinary, painful way.

We may never fully understand the ways of God this side of heaven, but we can trust that His ways are indeed supremely higher than ours and are intended for a greater, more glorious, purpose (reference Isaiah 55:8-9). It is often only through brokenness, painful trial, and sometimes death that God's brings restoration, healing, and new life. Today, as we take a step back in Scripture to rejoice with Mary, as she "glorifies" the Lord for the coming Savior of the world, let us move forward, through any pain we may be carrying, rejoicing in all that He has accomplished for us. Mary's song expresses it all for us:

***"My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
for He has been mindful of the humble state of His servant.
From now on all generations will call me blessed,
for the Mighty One has done great things for me - holy is His name.
His mercy extends to those who fear Him, from generation to generation.
He has performed mighty deeds with His arm;
He has scattered those who are proud in their inmost thoughts.
He has brought down rulers from their thrones but has lifted up the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things but has sent the rich away empty.
He has helped His servant Israel, remembering to be merciful
to Abraham and his descendants forever, even as He said to our fathers."
(Luke 1:46-55)***

***Heavenly Father,
"Because Christ suffered for [me],
leaving [me] and example,
[I] should follow in His steps.
'He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in His mouth.'
When they hurled their insults at Him,
He did not retaliate; when He suffered, He made no threats.
Instead, He entrusted Himself to Him who judges justly.
He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree,
so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness;
by His wounds [I] have been healed."
(1 Peter 2:21-24)***

***Forgive me when I question You when I am
faced with humiliation, betrayal, rejection, ridicule,
criticism, hostility, abuse, affliction, trial, pain,
sickness, suffering, injustice, difficulty, and death;
for by and through all these things You are accomplishing
Your greater kingdom plan. Give me Your strength to
endure, and Your Power and Presence within, to help
me in all things to follow the example You have set.
I don't want to do anything to bring more shame
upon Your name, I want my life to be to the world***

*a testimony to Your glory, Your goodness,
and Your powerful and gracious hand.
Thank You Lord for saving me from my sins
and giving me eternal life!
"Be exalted, O LORD, in Your strength;
we will sing and praise Your might."
(Psalm 21:13)
In Jesus' Victorious and Mighty Name. Amen.*

The Final Seven - Day 6:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 15:18-16:4

In the final hours before He went to the cross Jesus spent His time comforting His disciples. It is extraordinary to think that in the depths of extreme pain and suffering, Jesus continued to care about and meet the needs of others. Jesus, up to the very moment of death, exemplified the heart of a servant, laying down all concern for Himself He concentrated fully on the reason He had come and the work that He must finish. While He hung on the cross, dying for the sin of mankind, enduring the separation from the Father, He spoke seven times - all words of love for those He had come to save: 1) About the soldiers who were casting lots for His garments: **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"** (Luke 23:34a); 2) To the criminal who believed in Him while being crucified himself: **"I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in paradise"** (v. 43); 3) To His mother, Mary: **"Dear woman, here is your son,"** and to the disciple whom He loved, **"Here is your mother"** (John 19:26b, 27a); 4) Experiencing separation from the Father: **"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?", 'My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"** 5) After suffering for hours: **"I am thirsty"** (John 19:28b); 6) Before He breathed His last breath: **"Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit"** (Luke 23:46); 7) At the moment of death: **"It is finished"** (John 19:30)

In the depths of great sorrow and suffering Jesus continued His ministry and revealed to us the response He desires from His followers; the response of love. He has told us to expect persecution and trial, and has prepared us, by equipping us with His power so that we can remain stable and respond in any circumstance with His grace and peace. **"If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed My teaching, they will obey yours also. They will treat you this way because of My name, for they do not know the One who sent Me"** (John 15:20b, 21). As followers of Jesus Christ, we are called to take up our cross and follow Him, and this includes dying to self so we can live for Him. **"If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it"** (Luke 9:23-24). The life we now live is not our own; He has freed us from the shackles of this world and redeemed our life from the grave, so we are no longer dead in our sins, but have been given new life so we can live for Him.

***"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live,
but Christ lives in me."
(Galatians 2:20a)***

We can expect to be hated and persecuted by a world that does not know Christ, but we can also walk with confidence, and without fear, knowing that Jesus Christ has already prepared the way for us, paving it with His blood. **"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). We are ambassadors of Christ, His calling card to the world, and the way we respond to their ridicule and hatred may make all the difference in the world to them accepting or rejecting Christ. **"...offer the parts of your body to Him as instruments of righteousness"** (Romans 6:13b). We have the option every day, with everything we do or say, of being vessels for God's holy purposes to draw the world to Him or being instruments of Satan's purposes and becoming an obstacle in their paths. How we respond in the midst of the fiery trial will reveal our true character - and the character we should desire to show to the world is Christ and Christ alone. **"but we rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us"** (Romans 5:3-5). Jesus Christ went to the depths of the grave to save us from sin and death. With all the spiritual blessings we have received in Him, may we not question or argue, or be surprised, if He chooses to allow us to experience the depths of pain and suffering if it will provide an opportunity to rescue another soul from this world and set another captive free (reference Isaiah 58:6). Praise the Lord in the midst of life's most difficult storms, and ask Him to open your eyes to look beyond your pain to see His promises being fulfilled for your life and in the lives of those He desires to reach. Ask Him for the grace to respond to those who speak viciously and with ignorance by speaking the truth in love!

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the LORD Almighty. (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 27:57-61; Hebrews 4:1-16

Jesus' final words on the cross were, **"It is finished."** The work He had come to accomplish was now complete and He breathed His last breath and died. His body was taken down from the cross on Friday evening, the Day of Preparation before the Sabbath. The One Who, after completing His creative work, blessed the seventh day and made it holy, and Who later gave the Sabbath to Israel as a sign that she was His holy people, was now at rest, so that all people may come to experience His rest in His completed work on the cross. **"...this will be a sign between Me and you...so you may know that I am the LORD, who makes you holy"** (Exodus 31:13, 16-17).

***"There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from His. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience."
(Hebrews 4:9-10)***

The Lord had given the Sabbath as a day for mankind to experience "spiritual, mental, and physical restoration." **"The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath"** (Mark 2:27). Jesus had rebuked the teachers of the

Law on more than one occasion for corrupting His Sabbath-rest. They had so multiplied the restrictions and requirements of the Sabbath Law that it had become an unbearable, and unattainable, burden for the people, rather than observing it in the manner that God intended. They had distorted the meaning behind the Sabbath so much so that they elevated their man-made regulations above the needs of the people. Jesus performed seven miracles on the Sabbath, which, in turn, incited the leaders to seek His death (reference Luke 4:31-37, 38; 6:6-11; 13:10-17; 14:1-4; John 5:8-11; 9:1-14). **"I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or destroy it?"** (Luke 6:9). Jesus had expressed that the Lord's creative work may have been completed at Creation, but His compassionate work on behalf of mankind continues without regard for special days or festivals. **"My Father is always at work to this day, and I, too, am working"** (John 5:17). Of course, Jesus, acknowledging His special relationship with the Father only added further evidence to the case the Pharisees would bring against Him to demand His death. They did not understand what the Sabbath truly meant. **"I desire mercy, not sacrifice"** (Matthew 12:7).

God had given the Sabbath-rest to His people Israel on their way out of Egypt. It became an official covenant obligation when the Law was given at Mount Sinai (the Ten Commandments; reference Exodus 20:8-11). **"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy"** (v.8). They had been set apart for God's purposes and were to observe the Sabbath-rest as a weekly reminder that it is the Lord who sanctifies them and Who will provide for them. God's ultimate provision of the Sabbath-rest came through Jesus Christ, but not all of the Jewish people would believe in Him; therefore, they are the ones called to continue to observe the Sabbath-rest until their eyes are opened and they experience true rest in the salvation of Jesus Christ (reference Romans 11:25). **"In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength"** (Isaiah 30:15).

When the Israelites were entering the land of Canaan they failed to trust in the Lord's promise that He would provide for them, even after having experienced the miracles of their exodus from Egypt. As a result of their doubt and unbelief, the Lord sentenced them to forty years of wandering in the wilderness so they would learn to depend upon Him. **"So I declared an oath in My anger, 'They shall never enter My rest'"** (Psalm 95:11). The Lord established three Sabbath-rests for His people to observe: the weekly Sabbath, the Sabbath Year, and the Year of Jubilee (seven Sabbaths of seven years). Years later the Israelites would suffer the Lord's discipline again and experience seventy years of exile for failing to observe the Sabbath Year and giving the land its required rest.

The Sabbath-rest was meant to provide an opportunity for the people of God to delight themselves in the Lord and in His Law. He has always faithfully provided for His people. When the Israelites were finally at rest they were free to focus on building the house for the Lord (reference 1 Kings 5:4). Today, Jesus has triumphed over the grave and has given us eternal rest and peace in Him. His work is finished and there is nothing left for us to do but rest in His completed work on the cross. We, too, are called to concentrate our strength and resources on building His kingdom, trusting that we are secure in Him and have nothing internally or externally to fear. We live in a time of Jubilee, where our Lord has cancelled our sin-debt and set us free from the slavery of sin and death. Let us not make the tragic mistake of following the example of Israel who missed their opportunity to enter the promised land, but rather follow the cross of Christ and receive our inheritance today. **"Therefore, since the promise of entering His rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it"** (Hebrews 4:1).

Thank God for the rest that we now have because He suffered, bled and died on our behalf (see a repeat of the Day 34 devotional below for the victory He achieved for us over death!). May we not fall into Israel's repeated cycle of discipline because they failed to obey God's Word; but recognize the importance of daily spending time in the Word of God (and with the God of the Word) so we will not drift away, but rather draw closer to Him (reference Hebrews 4:12). We have been set free to build His kingdom, may we daily approach the throne of grace, where our

Savior is now seated in constant intercession for us and delight in the privilege and opportunity we have been given to spend intimate time with Him, praying according to His will, so that many more people will experience the glorious rest and peace that comes from His salvation (reference Hebrews 4:14-16). ***'Therefore, God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later He spoke through David, as was said before: 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts' (v. 7).***

***"See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful,
unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.
But encourage one another daily, as long it is called Today,
so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness.
We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end
the confidence we had at first."
(Hebrews 3:12-14)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Luke 1:67-79

This evening as we reflect on the extraordinary sacrifice that Christ made for us, the victory He achieved for us, and the gift He gave us, let us join Zechariah in his prophetic hymn of praise. What he was looking forward to, we have experienced and received. In Zechariah's song, called the Benedictus, or "Praise be," he sings the praises of the coming Lord who is our true Jubilee. Jesus Christ came to open prison doors and set the captives free. As in the year of Jubilee, Jesus has liberated the slaves, cancelled our sin debt, and invited us to claim our inheritance in Christ and experience true rest in Him (reference Leviticus 25:8-13; Isaiah 58:6-14). Praise the Lord, ***"Death has been swallowed up in victory"*** (1 Corinthians 15:54b), Jesus Christ has conquered death and the grave, and we have been given new life in Him!

***"Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because He has come and has redeemed His people.
He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of His servant David
(as He said through His holy prophets of long ago),
salvation from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us-
to show mercy to our fathers and to remember His holy covenant,
the oath He swore to our father Abraham:
to rescue us from the hand of our enemies,
and to enable us to serve Him without fear
in holiness and righteousness before Him all our days.
And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High;
for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for Him,
to give His people the knowledge of salvation
through the forgiveness of their sins,***

*because of the tender mercy of our God,
by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven
to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death,
to guide our feet into the path of peace."
(Luke 1:68-79)*

*Heavenly Father,
"My soul finds rest in God alone;
my salvation comes from Him.
He alone is my rock and my salvation;
He is my fortress, I will never be shaken."
(Psalm 62:1-2)
"Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices;
my body also will rest secure,
because you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor will you let Your Holy One see decay.
You have made known to me the path of life;
You will fill me with joy in Your presence,
with eternal pleasures at Your right hand."
(Psalm 16:9-11)
Thank You, Lord, for the rest we have found in You
from the moment we received Your salvation,
as well as each and every day as we learn to abide in You.
May we never fail to enter that rest, but fully
claim our inheritance in You as we meet You in
Your Word and in prayer with You each day.
Help me to never doubt Your Word
but grow to trust You more and more each day.
Thank You for the victory You have given Me.
All praise and glory and honor and strength
belong to only You.
In the victorious name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.*

The Final Seven - Day 7:

RAISE UP THE STANDARD!

"To Him Who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before His glorious Presence without fault and with great joy - to the Only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen." (Jude 24)

Morning Devotion: Feasting in His Presence - Read John 16:17-24

Happy Glorious and Victorious Resurrection Morning! As the light breaks on the dawn of a new day we rejoice in the power and majesty of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and the victory we have in Him! Praise God for the work He has finished, and for the new life we now have because He was crucified, buried, and is now ALIVE! Beloved, we know and serve a Risen Lord! Today, let us offer Him all the adoration and worship that He deserves! He has Risen! He has Risen, Indeed!

***"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned."
(Isaiah 9:2)***

The Lord's final message to His disciples before going to the cross was a reminder that their sorrow would be turned to joy. ***"Weeping may remain for a night but rejoicing comes in the morning"*** (Psalm 30:5b). The cross would appear to them to be a terrible defeat, but for those who continue to walk by faith, they would be given eyes to see that it is quite the contrary, for the cross achieved the greatest victory (reference Colossians 2:15)! ***"I tell you the truth, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy...Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy"*** (John 16:20, 22).

As believers in Jesus Christ, we worship, follow, and serve a Risen Lord! Our God came into the world as a humble servant, but has become for us a conquering King who has won for us victory over sin and death, and through the cross has stomped on the enemy and the grave. Because of His work on the cross and His resurrection from the dead, we, who believe, have been rescued from a life of sin and now have eternal life with Him! Beloved, we have absolute victory in Him! All the power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead is now at work in and through us as we live and walk this new life with Him (reference Ephesians 1:18-20). May we lift up our eyes each and every day, look beyond our present circumstances no matter how painful or difficult they may be, and praise Him for the work He has done and continues to do on our behalf. We have no reason to doubt or fear or be downcast in anyway, our Savior has delivered us from bondage in this world and has set us free to live and walk in confidence with and for Him. ***"In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us"*** (Romans 8:37).

What more could we possibly ask of the Lord who has given us everything we could possibly need? May we ask only for those things that will bless and glorify His Name, and resolve to live the life He has given us to the glory and praise of His blessed name! ***"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope - the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own, eager to do what is good"*** (Titus 2:11-14).

Beloved, if we suffer at all in this world may it be for the sake of the gospel message, if we grow tired or weary from our work may it be because we have worn ourselves out for the glory of His name, and if we have anything to say at all in this life, may our message be simple and the praise of the Lord always on our lips as we preach Christ alone and Him Crucified! For ***"Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved"*** (Acts 4:12). We know the truth and the truth has set us free, now let us take the key we have been given and go out and proclaim His glorious message of salvation to the world (reference Matthew 28:18-20)!

***"In that day you will no longer ask Me anything.
I tell you the truth, My Father will give you whatever you ask in My name.
Until now you have not asked for anything in My name.
Ask and you will receive and your joy will be complete."***

(John 16:23-24)

REVOLUTIONIZE THE WORLD!

"Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD Almighty." (Zechariah 4:6)

Afternoon Devotion: Filled with His Power - Read Matthew 28:1-10

Early on that glorious morning of the Resurrection the women arrived at the tomb to find the stone has already been rolled away. Their concern has already been met, but now they were met with an even greater concern, where could their Lord possibly be?

***"There was a violent earthquake,
for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and,
going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it.
His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow.
The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.
The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid,
for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.
He is not here; He has risen, just as He said.
come and see the place where He lay."
(Matthew 28:2-6)***

The angel did not come and roll away the stone so Jesus could come out from the grave, for He was already risen; the angel opened the door so the people could see for themselves that the tomb was indeed empty. Our Lord is always opening doors for us to come and see the wondrous works He is doing on our behalf, but many times we stand before the door and refuse to enter because we don't have the faith to believe (reference Revelation 3:20). We are not called to believe in our faith, we are called to believe in Jesus Christ. The object of our faith is the crucified and risen Lord! There is no greater power available on this earth, and all that power is available to us who will believe in Him. The stone was rolled away so we could enter in by faith and experience His salvation power and receive new life in Him!

When God wants to get a message across He will often use an earthquake to get the people's attention. When the Lord gave the Law at Mount Sinai there was a great earthquake: ***"On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain, and a very loud trumpet blast. Everyone in the camp trembled...Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the LORD descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently, and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder"*** (reference Exodus 19:16, 18); when our Lord died on the cross there was another great earthquake: ***"At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in tow from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split....When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, 'Surely He was the Son of God!'"*** (Matthew 27:51, 54); and when the angel of the Lord came down from heaven to roll away the stone from the tomb where our Savior's body had laid there was another great earthquake: ***"There was a violent earthquake...The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men"*** (Matthew 28:2-4). These earthquakes not only shook the earth, they

shook the people who were there to experience them. God had something to say and He wanted to make sure His message got across to the people.

The message of the cross is meant to shake the world. To some, their lives will be so shaken with being confronted by the holiness and glory of God that they will fall on their face in worship and lay down their lives to follow Jesus Christ; to others, the message of the cross will only make them stumble and fall further away from God (reference 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23-24). May we who believe not be afraid of our great Mountain Mover, but rather stand firm on His solid rock foundation and allow Him to do the work in our lives so that we can have the faith to move mountains with Him. Beloved, time is of the essence, He has given us this promise that He will come again (reference Matthew 24:29-35)! May we have the faith in these last days to remain steadfast in, and hold fast, to Him (reference Luke 18:8). ***"You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come...There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me...Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved"*** (Matthew 24:6, 7b-9, 12-13).

May we keep watch and be found faithful as we await with expectancy the return of our Lord. May we not waste the time we have been given to share the glorious message of our Risen Lord with a world that is dying to know the hope that we have found in Him (reference 1 Peter 3:15). Be blessed, dear saint, as you go forward, to share His good news with the world, clothed in the glorious garment of His salvation (reference Isaiah 61:10)!

***"At that time His voice shook the earth, but now He has promised,
'Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.'
The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken -
that is, created things - so that what cannot be shaken may remain.
Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken,
let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,
for our 'God is a consuming fire.' "
(Hebrews 12:26-29)***

RESTORE PRAISE!

"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever, Amen!" (Revelation 7:12)

Evening Devotion: Focused on His Praise - Read Luke 2:29-31

This evening, as we come to the close of our amazing forty-plus day journey with the Lord, we have so much to praise Him for. Let us rejoice that He has shown Himself so personally and intimately with each of us and has, first and foremost, opened our eyes to see the light of His glorious salvation. How truly blessed we are! There was another man in the gospel story who was waiting to see the salvation of the Lord before he died; the Lord was faithful to show Him His glory because it is our Lord's desire that none would perish before coming to the light of His salvation. Simeon's words are brief, but he embraced the Son of God in his arms and offered his

Savior his praise. May the testimony and message of our lives be like his, that we would spend our lives to know and glorify the Lord as we wait upon Him (reference Psalm 27):

***"Sovereign Lord, as You have promised,
You now dismiss Your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen Your salvation,
which You have prepared in the sight of all people,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles
and for glory to Your people Israel."
(Luke 2: 29-31)***

***Heavenly Father,
There is no better place to begin or end,
then in praise to Your glorious and powerful name.
Thank You, Lord for saving me!
"The LORD lives!
Praise be to my Rock!
Exalted be God, the Rock, my Savior!
(2 Samuel 2:47)
"I will praise You, O LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all Your wonders.
I will be glad and rejoice in You;
I will sing praise to Your name,
O Most High."
(Psalm 9:1, 2)
"Sing to the LORD, you saints of His;
praise His holy name."
(Psalm 30:4)
"Sing joyfully to the LORD, you righteous;
it is fitting for the upright to praise Him."
(Psalm 33:1)
"He put a new song in my mouth,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see and fear and put their trust in the LORD."
(Psalm 40:3)
"I will praise You, O Lord, among the nations;
I will sing of You among the peoples.
For great is Your love, reaching to the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the skies.
Be exalted, O God, above the heavens;
let Your glory be over all the earth."
(Psalm 57:9-11)
"Shout with joy to God, all the earth!
Sing the glory of His name; make His praise glorious!
(Psalm 66:1, 2)
"I will praise God's name in song
and glorify Him with thanksgiving."
(Psalm 69:30)***

***"My mouth is filled with Your praise,
declaring Your splendor all day long."
(Psalm 71:8)***
***"I will praise You, O Lord my God, with all my heart:
I will glorify Your name forever.
For great is Your love toward me;
You have delivered me from the depths of the grave."
(Psalm 86:12-13)***
***"Sing to the LORD, praise His name;
proclaim His salvation day after day.
Declare His glory among the nations,
His marvelous deeds among all peoples."
(Psalm 96:2-3)***
***"Praise the LORD, all you nations;
extol Him, all you peoples.
For great is His love toward us,
and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever.
Praise the LORD."
(Psalm 117:1-2)***
***"Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise!"
(Revelation 5:12)***
***"To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb
be praise and honor and glory and power, for ever and ever!"
(Revelation 5:13b)***
***"Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor
and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever.
Amen!"
(Revelation 7:12)***
***In the glorious, mighty, holy, and wonderful name of Jesus Christ,
I pray. Amen.***

**Thank You for your commitment to fast and pray
and seek the Lord these past 47 days!**

**I am so grateful for your friendship and encouragement
along the way as we walked together with
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
and experienced the Victory we have
in Him through the Power of the Cross.**

**May the message we have been given
be the trumpet call of our lives and
may we sound it loud and clear as we
resolve to know nothing, and proclaim no other message,
except Jesus Christ and Him crucified!**