

## Day One

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Looking at Isaiah 52:13-53:12, we can nod in agreement to all that the suffering servant endured in our place. He bore our sin. He bore the punishment that we deserve and that sin demands. He died in our place so that we could live – so that we could have peace with God. We know that Jesus did that for us.

But how does that become a reality? How does that become more than just head knowledge? One possibility might be to watch “The Passion of the Christ.” Watch the scenes that take place after Jesus is arrested – the scenes that culminate with Him being crucified. Watch those scenes and see yourself in Jesus’ place. See yourself suffering all that He does.

Maybe that would help us understand the magnitude of His sacrifice for us. If not for Jesus’ willingness to suffer in our place, all that we would see Him endure on His way to the cross would be ours. He took our place so that we wouldn’t have to suffer so – so that we wouldn’t be cut off from God. The punishment that brought us peace with God fell on Him and not on us.

What a joy that is. What a gracious and undeserved gift.

## Day Two

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Matthew 27:57-66 details some of the activities that take place between Jesus’ burial and His resurrection. It is a time of waiting – a time of waiting that is different from ours. We wait in eager anticipation of the Easter celebration when we celebrate Jesus resurrection and the empty tomb.

For the women, it was a time of great sorrow. It was a time without hope. It was a time when they waited for the Sabbath to end so that they could go and do for Jesus’ body what was needed to complete the burial preparations. It was not a joyous time.

The chief priests and the Pharisees were also waiting. For them, it was an anxious time – a time of fear. Because Jesus had said that after three days He would rise again, they were afraid that Jesus’ disciples would come and steal His body so that they could tell people that He rose from the dead. It was not a time of joy for them either.

But for us it is! We know why the tomb is empty. And it’s not because His disciples stole His body. It’s empty because Jesus rose just as He said. It’s empty because the grave could not hold Him. It’s empty because He lives. And because He lives, so do we.

## Day Three

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One of my favorite hymns is “I Know That My Redeemer Lives.” Whether the inspiration for that comes from Job 19:23-27 or not, I don’t know. But there is certainly a connection. Both the hymn and Job speak of God’s promise and faithfulness.

Job knows that his Redeemer lives and that he will see God in his flesh. He knows that because he believes God’s Word and promise. He knows that and believes that in spite of the realities that he has encountered. A quick read of Job shows us that his life currently was no picnic. He has lost wealth, family and health. His friends are convinced that it is because of some unconfessed sin that Job suffers so – that God is punishing him for that unconfessed sin.

And still he confesses that he knows that his Redeemer lives and that he will see God in his flesh. That is the power of God’s Word alive in his heart that enables him to make that confession. That same Word is at work in us to enable to confess that we know that our Redeemer lives and that we will see Him face to face.

We know that because God is faithful and He keeps His promises. We know that because the tomb is empty guaranteeing that Jesus is the YES to every promise of God. We know that’s true because we have been joined together with Jesus in Baptism. We have been joined with Him in His resurrection and nothing that we suffer in this world can change that or take that away from us. That is our hope and joy.

## **Day Four**

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In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul is writing about the resurrection – Jesus’ resurrection and ours. The Greeks believed in an afterlife, but it didn’t include a bodily resurrection. Such a concept was nonsense to the Greek mind. The body (the material) was seen as a bad thing that needed to be destroyed. It contained or held prisoner the spirit. That spirit was a part of THE spirit (the power) that was their god. So the body had to be destroyed so that the spirit could be free to be united again with THE spirit.

It’s in that context that Paul writes: “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.” Our hope in Christ is not for this world only. There is a world beyond – a new world – that is the kingdom of God. It is our possession in Jesus Christ. And we will live there and walk there in our bodies – in our glorified bodies. We will be physically present there for all of eternity.

That is our hope and it is a hope that has significance for our life in the here and now. We live with the certainty that because Jesus lives, we will live as well. And that’s not just a future thing. It is a present reality, but it is a now and not yet kind of thing.

We have been raised to life and we believe that. It is our possession right now by faith in Jesus. And we live in that new life as we trust God to complete in our flesh what He has given to us by faith. God will bring to completion all that He began when He called us to faith. That work is going on right now and will be made complete in the day of our Lord’s return.

## **Day Five**

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Psalm 55:22 is a great source of comfort for those who are oppressed or burdened – or it should be. It is also a verse that the devil will use the troubles of this life to convince you that God’s promise is not true. That is the tension that we live with in this broken world. God speaks His promises and the devil works to convince us that they are lies.

That’s why the empty tomb is so important. It is the guarantee that all of God’s promises are YES in Jesus Christ. Jesus completed God’s plan of salvation through His perfect life, His sacrificial death and His victorious resurrection. Death and the devil don’t get the last word. The empty tomb is the guarantee that the devil is indeed the father of lies.

The empty tomb is also the guarantee that Jesus is with us always – especially in the midst of troubles. Having given Himself to us – having invested Himself in us – He will not leave us to fend for ourselves as we face the troubles of this world. He will indeed hold us in His hand and never permit us to be moved.