

Day One

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

In Ephesians 3, Paul prays that the Ephesians would grasp – take hold of – God’s love as the treasure that it is. This gift that God give is no white elephant. It’s not the kind of gift that we politely receive and then put in the closet where no one can see it. It is a gift that is a treasure – that needs to be grasped like one would take hold of any treasure.

It is also a gift that is bigger than the box. God’s love is infinite. The gift will always be bigger than we can think or imagine. It is a gift that, by its nature, is new every morning – that is poured out on us in abundance each day. It is a living and active gift.

We also need to remember that we are that kind of treasure to God. He has taken hold of us. We are precious in His sight. We are that treasure in the field that Jesus gave all that He had – including His life – so that He could possess us as His own.

Paul’s prayer is my prayer for you (and me) that we would take hold of God’s love – that we would continue to grow in His love – so that we would know how high and deep God’s love is for us.

Day Two

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In Mark 14, we look at Peter’s denial. He had walked with Jesus for about three years. He was one of Jesus’ closest friends – part of the inner circle with James and John. And on that night when Jesus was arrested and taken to the home of the high priest, Peter denied that even knew Jesus.

How many times and how many different ways do we do the same? Whenever we read about Peter, we are forced to confront the ways we deny knowing Jesus – by our silence motivated by fear or some other insecurity.

And when that happens, we need to recognize our sin, confess it and ask God for the strength to be a better witness. And the Holy Spirit who lives in us is at work to accomplish that. And as we pray that prayer, we need to remember that a big part of our witness is to confess our sin and the forgiveness that is ours in Jesus.

By recognizing and confessing our sin, we honor Jesus. We confess our need. We point to Him who is our rescue and strength. We don’t blame. We don’t deny. We don’t rationalize. We simply confess and throw ourselves on His mercy. And in so doing, we give a living testimony to His gracious love for us and for all who will believe.

Day Three

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Luke 1:26-38 records the announcement made by Gabriel to Mary that she would give birth to the Son of God. This troubled Mary because she was a virgin. Gabriel assured her that God would accomplish it. And she said, “May it be to me as you have said.”

Hers was a response of faith. She was the Lord’s servant. She didn’t know how God would do it and it didn’t matter. She simply trusted God to keep His Word. That is the Mary we celebrate – the humble servant who simply believes God at His Word.

She provides that example for us. She is an illustration for living by faith. She is troubled because she doesn’t understand how such a thing could happen. And she says so. And Gabriel’s answer is one of detail for how it will be. He simply speaks the promise. And Mary believes.

Day Four

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The life of a Christian is one of waiting – waiting for the culmination of all that God has promised to us through Jesus life, death and resurrection. It is a time of waiting in hope – in a hope that is certain and sure because Jesus is the YES to every promise of God. That hope is guaranteed by the empty tomb.

That is our hope. That is what sustains us as we wait for Jesus' return. That is the source of our joy – a joy that remains our possession even when life is anything but a joy. When life gives you lemons, don't make lemonade. Look to the cross and the empty tomb – look to Jesus who is the YES to every promise of God – and know that God is at work for good for those who love Him and have been called according to His purpose.

Day Five

Saturday – August 4, 2018: John 19:25-27

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Here in John 19:25-27, we have women standing near the cross as Jesus hangs dying on it. This is a sad scene – a time of despair. The women are helpless. There is nothing they can do to prevent the inevitable. Hope is draining out of their lives as Jesus' life drains out of Him – or at least it seems so.

They don't know yet (even though Jesus told them) that He will rise from the dead. They don't yet know that Jesus had to die so that they could live. He had to accomplish in His flesh what they (and we) are unable to do. He had to die so that we could live – so that we could live as a new creation – as adopted children of God.

This is not the end of hope. This is the fulfillment. By His life, death and resurrection, Jesus becomes the YES to every promise of God. By faith in Jesus and His saving work, we are incorporated into the YES. His YES becomes ours. That is our hope and it is certain and sure. There is nothing in all of creation, not even death, that can change that. The empty tomb is the guarantee.