

# Enhancing Your Worship

## Meditating on God's Word and Works

I will meditate on your wondrous works. Psalm 119:27  
My eyes are awake through the night watches,  
That I may meditate on Your word. Psalm 119:148 NKJV

### Easter Week

#### Introduction

Most modern forms of mediation turn a person inward. Biblical meditation turns a person outward toward what God has said and done especially what He has said and done through Jesus for our salvation.

Early in my ministry church workers who grew up in the first half of the twentieth century would ask if I had ever gone to church on Easter Monday. I was surprised to learn that there was a time when Lutherans would gather in church to worship on Easter Monday.

Examining The Lutheran Hymnal, I learned that lessons and propers were appointed for Easter Monday and Easter Tuesday. Lutheran Worship does not have propers for Easter week. What about Lutheran Service Book? It contains lessons and propers for Easter Tuesday and Easter Wednesday.

Now I was curious! In the Eastern Orthodox Church the week following Easter (which for them is April 19 this year) is Bright Week with special services and lessons each day of the week. Bright Week refers to the light Jesus brought into the world. During Bright Week fasting is strictly forbidden! Each service in Bright Week is really a continuation of the Festival of the Resurrection. In the Ukrainian Catholic Church Bright Week services are the most heavily attended liturgies of the year. On Easter Monday (Bright Monday) there is a special remembrance of baptism we were connected to Jesus' death and resurrection.

In services throughout the week the people are greeted with "Christ is risen!" and they respond "He is risen indeed!" (Modern Lutherans sometimes add "Alleluia" to this greeting which we have adopted from them.)

#### Easter Monday

##### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 1

Awake, my heart, with gladness,  
See what today is done;  
Now, after gloom and sadness,  
Comes forth the glorious sun.  
My Savior there was laid  
Where our bed must be made  
When to the realms of light  
Our spirit wings its flight.

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

**C** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

**C** make known his deeds among the peoples! (Psalm 105:1)

### Luke 24:13-35

<sup>13</sup> That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, <sup>14</sup> and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. <sup>15</sup> While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. <sup>16</sup> But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. <sup>17</sup> And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. <sup>18</sup> Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” <sup>19</sup> And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, <sup>20</sup> and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. <sup>21</sup> But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. <sup>22</sup> Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, <sup>23</sup> and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. <sup>24</sup> Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” <sup>25</sup> And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! <sup>26</sup> Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” <sup>27</sup> And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

<sup>28</sup> So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther, <sup>29</sup> but they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, for it is toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. <sup>30</sup> When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. <sup>31</sup> And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. <sup>32</sup> They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” <sup>33</sup> And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, <sup>34</sup> saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” <sup>35</sup> Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

During your joyous celebration of Easter you may find your heart tinged with sadness from knowing someone near to you is not a believer in Jesus. When we find so much comfort and peace in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, our acceptance into the family of God, and the promise of eternal life, it is extremely painful when family and friends, husband or wife or children seem so far from the Savior and His gift of salvation.

On this Easter Monday, it is good to remember even Jesus’ own disciples were once unbelievers. Of course we all remember the Apostle Paul who once persecuted the Church but he was not alone. In fact, no one is born a believer. We all must come to faith by the working of the Holy Spirit through word and sacrament.

This may have happened for you in your baptism. Or it may have happened for you when you first heard the Gospel and believed. Or it may have happened to you after many years of rejecting the Gospel and then finally coming to faith.

On the first Easter, when the day was soon to be “far spent,” two unbelieving disciples were on their way to a nearby village. We know that they were unbelievers because Jesus says to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!”

Then an amazing thing happened. The disciples came to faith! How did this happen? It happened through Moses and all the Prophets, that is, the Old Testament Scriptures! They came to faith the same way we do. By the power of the Holy Spirit working through the word!

Early in my ministry and several times through the years, God allowed me to witness “dye in the wool” unbelievers come to faith! For some it happened early in life and for others at the very end. This is a reminder to never give up hope that a loved one or family member will one day believe in Jesus. When this happens, it is always a miracle. We look forward to a time when we can say with them, “The Lord has risen indeed!”

Prayer: Almighty God, through the resurrection of Your Son You grant eternal life to us and all believers. We pray that the Holy Spirit would touch the heart of our unbelieving friends that they may share with us in the joy of Easter, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of eternal life. During this time of national and personal distress grant to us the peace of God that surpasses all understanding through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Easter Tuesday

### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 2

The foe in triumph shouted  
When Christ lay in the tomb;  
But lo, he now is routed,  
His boast is turned to gloom.  
For Christ again is free;  
In glorious victory  
He who is strong to save  
Has triumphed o'er the grave.

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

**C** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

**C** make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

**Introit** *Psalm 118:13–14, 17–18, 29; antiphon: Psalm 118:17*

I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the Lord.

**I was pushed hard, so that I was falling,  
but the Lord helped me.**

The Lord is my strength and my song;  
he has become my salvation.

**I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the Lord.**

The Lord has disciplined me severely,  
but he has not given me over to death.

**Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;  
for his steadfast love endures forever!**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son  
and to the Holy Spirit;**

**as it was in the beginning,  
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

I shall not die, but I shall live,  
and recount the deeds of the Lord.

## Luke 24:36–49

<sup>36</sup>As they were talking about these things, Jesus himself stood among them, and said to them, “Peace to you!” <sup>37</sup>But they were startled and frightened and thought they saw a spirit. <sup>38</sup>And he said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? <sup>39</sup>See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” <sup>40</sup>And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. <sup>41</sup>And while they still disbelieved for joy and were marveling, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” <sup>42</sup>They gave him a piece of broiled fish, <sup>43</sup>and he took it and ate before them.

<sup>44</sup>Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” <sup>45</sup>Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, <sup>46</sup>and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, <sup>47</sup>and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. <sup>48</sup>You are witnesses of these things. <sup>49</sup>And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Why are you troubled? This is a reasonable question. What will happen with this pandemic? Will I have enough food? Will my job come back? Can I pay my bills? Will the church fall apart? Will I get the virus? On and on and on it goes. We begin to imagine the worst.

So also were the disciples troubled. They too must have imagined the worst. Jesus is gone. What will happen to us? This is our natural condition. Worry, worry, worry! Trouble, trouble, trouble!

When Jesus appeared to the disciples in their time of fright and trouble, His solution was to teach them the Scriptures. They learned from Jesus that the entire Old Testament, from the Books of Moses through the Prophets including the Psalms, spoke of Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection.

During this week of Easter, it is important to remember that if God gives us forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus, will He not also give us everything else that we need? That is exactly what the Apostle Paul says, “If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:31-32).

Prayer: Almighty God, through the resurrection of Your Son You have secured peace for our troubled consciences. Through all the uncertainties of this present national crisis, keep us from anxiety and worry. Grant us this peace evermore that trusting in the merit of Your Son we may come at last to the perfect peace of heaven; through the same Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Easter Wednesday

### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 3

This is a sight that gladdens—  
What peace it doth impart!  
Now nothing ever saddens  
The joy within my heart.  
No gloom shall ever shake,  
No foe shall ever take  
The hope which God’s own Son  
In love for me has won.

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

- L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!  
**C** **O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia!** (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)  
**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,  
**C** **make known his deeds among the peoples!** (Psalm 105:1)

## Psalm 61

<sup>1</sup>Hear my cry, O God, listen to my prayer;  
<sup>2</sup>**from the end of the earth I call to you when my heart is faint. Lead me to the rock that is higher than I,**  
<sup>3</sup>for you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the enemy.  
<sup>4</sup>**Let me dwell in your tent forever! Let me take refuge under the shelter of your wings!**  
<sup>5</sup>For you, O God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name.  
<sup>6</sup>**Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations!**  
<sup>7</sup>May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!  
<sup>8</sup>**So will I ever sing praises to your name, as I perform my vows day after day.**  
**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**  
**as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

## John 21:1–14

<sup>1</sup>After this Jesus revealed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he revealed himself in this way. <sup>2</sup>Simon Peter, Thomas (called the Twin), Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples were together. <sup>3</sup>Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

<sup>4</sup>Just as day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Jesus said to them, “Children, do you have any fish?” They answered him, “No.” <sup>6</sup>He said to them, “Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in, because of the quantity of fish. <sup>7</sup>That disciple whom Jesus loved therefore said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he was stripped for work, and threw himself into the sea. <sup>8</sup>The other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, but about a hundred yards off.

<sup>9</sup>When they got out on land, they saw a charcoal fire in place, with fish laid out on it, and bread. <sup>10</sup>Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” <sup>11</sup>So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, 153 of them. And although there were so many, the net was not torn. <sup>12</sup>Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared ask him, “Who are you?” They knew it was the Lord. <sup>13</sup>Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. <sup>14</sup>This was now the third time that Jesus was revealed to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

What are you allowed to do during the “Stay at home order”? You may shop for food and the necessities of life. You may travel to care for another person. You may travel to places where you may walk in parks. Among other things, you may go fishing!

There are so many things from the time of Jesus that I don’t fully understand. What did the food taste like? How hard was it to walk up from Jericho to Jerusalem? What did it smell like on the streets of Nazareth? These questions can go on and on. But one thing I do know. It is how to go fishing. Notice that I didn’t say, “I know how to catch fish.”

Fishing is one of the great mysteries of life. Many years ago my dad had a twelve foot wooden boat (For you non-fishermen, that is a very small boat). It was small enough that we could carry it across the beach to launch in Lake Michigan. He also had a small 5 hp outboard that we also carried across the beach.

One evening, not too far from shore we were fishing for perch. Dad sat by the motor and I sat in the bow. Dad pulled up fish after fish. Sometimes they would be double headers (two fish on one line at the same time). I sat there and watched not more than 10 feet away. Did I catch a fish? No! Did I get a bite? NO! Yet dad just

kept pulling up the fish. One time I remember the tip of his rod bent down and he said to the fish on his line at the bottom of the lake, "You'll have to wait, I'm busy!" I wasn't busy! I couldn't catch a fish.

Whenever I read the account of the disciples fishing all night and catching nothing, I think of that day. When Jesus says, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some," I think of that day.

So what do you make of the 153 fish? Through the centuries, Christian writers have tried to find some symbolic meaning in that number. Some have suggested this, others that. None are very convincing. So why 153? I know. It is because there were 153 fish!

I may not know what food tasted like in Jesus' day. I may not know what it smelled like in Nazareth. But I do know this: Fishermen count their fish! I may have forgotten how many fish my dad caught that day but I'm sure he knew. I had zero but I can remember the smile on his face as he counted each one. He counted them again when we came to shore. He counted them again as we prepared them for supper. He counted them again as he fried them. A fisherman may say he caught a few or a mess of fish but he knows exactly how many!

So you ask, "Why does this matter?" I find this little detail to be amazingly comforting. It is one of those details that makes the entire event real. Why make up a number like that? If the story were invented, there would be no need to include the exact number.

John was a fisherman. He was there. When he wrote down this account he remembered that day in great detail. He even remembered the number of fish!

The details of your life matter. They make you who you are. God is interested in the details of your life. He knows even the number of hairs on your head. Whatever detail of life is causing you concern right now, whether it be life and death or whether it be how much money is in your bank account, Jesus is aware and cares for you.

Each of Jesus' resurrection appearances demonstrates His love and care for the disciples. We take comfort in His care for us during the distress and discomfort of these present times.

Prayer: Almighty God, by the glorious resurrection of Your Son, Jesus Christ, You destroyed death and brought life and immortality to light. Grant that we, who have been raised with Him, may abide in His presence and rejoice in the hope of eternal glory; let us never become dismayed with the uncertain details of life here on earth through the same Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Easter Thursday

### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 4

Now hell, its prince, the devil,  
Of all their pow'r are shorn;  
Now I am safe from evil,  
And sin I laugh to scorn.  
Grim death with all its might  
Cannot my soul affright;  
It is a pow'rless form,  
Howe'er it rave and storm.

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

**C** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

**Psalm 118:14-17**

<sup>14</sup> The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.

<sup>15</sup> **Glad songs of salvation are in the tents of the righteous:**

**“The right hand of the Lord does valiantly,**

<sup>16</sup> the right hand of the Lord exalts, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!”

<sup>17</sup> **I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord.**

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;  
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

**John 3:1-15**

<sup>3:1</sup> Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. <sup>2</sup> This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.” <sup>3</sup> Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” <sup>4</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” <sup>5</sup> Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. <sup>6</sup> That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. <sup>7</sup> Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ <sup>8</sup> The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit.”

<sup>9</sup> Nicodemus said to him, “How can these things be?” <sup>10</sup> Jesus answered him, “Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? <sup>11</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. <sup>12</sup> If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly things? <sup>13</sup> No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. <sup>14</sup> And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, <sup>15</sup> that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

On Easter Thursday or Bright Thursday, John 3:1-15 is read every year in the Ukrainian Catholic Church. This familiar account of Nicodemus coming at night to Jesus is particularly appropriate for Easter week. It reminds us of the connection between baptism and the resurrection.

You may recall that baptism is strongly connected to Lent and our need of repentance. Luther rightly reminds us that repentance is simply returning to our baptism every day!

We read in Luther's Small Catechism:

**What does such baptizing with water indicate?**

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily emerge and arise to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

**Where is this written?**

St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into 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.” (Rom. 6:4)

Easter also reminds us of the second part of baptism, the daily rising to new life. In fact, Easter is a special time for us to remember the connection between baptism and eternal life which we also find in the Small Catechism.

**What benefits does Baptism give?**

It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

**Which are these words and promises of God?**

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but

whoever does not believe will be condemned.” (Mark 16:16)

Jesus rescued us from death and the devil on the cross and gives us eternal salvation through faith. The Holy Spirit works this faith in us through word and sacrament. The connection between our salvation and baptism is so strong that the Apostle Peter writes, “Baptism doth also now save us” and he goes on to say, “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:21 KJV).

In fact, the connection between Easter and baptism is found in the very shape of most baptismal fonts. Have you ever counted the sides? Throughout history you will discover that baptismal fonts have eight sides to remind us of the resurrection and new life. Because of this connection between baptism and the resurrection Eastern Orthodox Churches are built in the shape of a baptismal font, having eight sides.

Why the number eight? Jesus rose from the dead on the eighth day! On that day God began His New Creation! Wait a minute. Didn't Jesus rise from the dead on the first day? Indeed He did. But another way to think of Easter is the eighth day because it is the day following the seventh day Sabbath when Jesus was in the tomb. (You also may have remembered that there were eight people in Noah's family who were saved at the time of the flood.)

From the time of Jesus until now, Christians are gathered into the family of God and become partakers of the resurrection through baptism. Some like Nicodemus may ask, “How can these things be?” However, we recognize that just as God is able bring the dead to life, the Holy Spirit is able to bring unbelievers to faith.

<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, <sup>5</sup> even ***when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ***—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).

Prayer: Almighty God, You protected Noah and his family in the ark. You led Your people out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea. At His baptism in the Jordan River You declared our Lord Jesus to be Your beloved Son. In the waters of baptism You washed away our sin. Let us always rejoice that you have made us your baptized children, part of your family, for all eternity; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Easter Friday

### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness - 5

The world against me rages,  
Its fury I disdain;  
Though bitter war it wages,  
Its work is all in vain.  
My heart from care is free,  
No trouble troubles me.  
Misfortune now is play,  
And night is bright as day.

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

**C** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

**Luke 1:46-55 Mary's Song of Praise: The Magnificat**

“My soul magnifies the Lord,  
**and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,**  
for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant.  
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;  
**for he who is mighty has done great things for me,**  
**and holy is his name.**  
And his mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
**He has shown strength with his arm;**  
**he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts;**  
he has brought down the mighty from their thrones  
and exalted those of humble estate;  
**he has filled the hungry with good things,**  
**and the rich he has sent away empty.**  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
**as he spoke to our fathers,**  
**to Abraham and to his offspring forever.”**

**John 19:25b-27**

<sup>25</sup> Standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. <sup>26</sup> When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” <sup>27</sup> Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

We all remember Mary at Christmas. We think of her visit from the angel Gabriel. We remember her time with Elizabeth who was soon to give birth to John the Baptist. We imagine the rigors of her trip from Nazareth to Bethlehem and then the flight into Egypt. Our hearts go out to this young woman who must place her new born baby in a manger because there was no room for her in the inn. We think of her amazement at the arrival of shepherds and wise men. We contemplate her wonder at the words of Simeon and Anna. We resonate with her astonishment at hearing her twelve year old eloquently answering difficult questions in the temple.

During the frenzied activity surrounding Jesus' passion, we think of Judas, Caiaphas, and Pilate. We remember Peter and his sword, Malchus, the servant girl, and the rooster crowing. We see Herod looking for miracles and Simon of Cyrene carrying Jesus' cross. We learn of the viciousness of Roman soldiers, who whip, mock, and fashion a crown of thorns. We stand in awe at the love and compassion, bravery and nerve of Joseph of Arimathea who went to Pilate to claim Jesus' body and properly prepare it for burial in his own new tomb.

In the middle of all this activity, among the women at the cross, we once again briefly see Mary. Christians through the centuries have imagined the agony that she must have felt at the sight of Jesus on the cross. Gone were the adoring multitudes. She heard no words of praise for her son, only mockery and disdain.

Jesus in His love and compassion for His mother provides for her future care by designating John to take His place as her son, guardian, and protector. According to church history, John was faithful to that assignment.

But on this Easter Friday, I want you to think of another event not recorded in Scripture. I want you to pause and briefly imagine the wonder, amazement, delight, and joy Mary must have experienced on that first Easter as she learned of her son's resurrection. As hard as it is for us to picture her pain at the cross, it is even more incredible to envision her delight at the resurrection.

The last time Mary is mentioned in the Bible is in Acts chapter 1 after Jesus' ascension into heaven. Her life would never be the same. Her son had accomplished His task. He had paid for the sins of the world and redeemed all of us from death and the devil. She could live the remainder of her life with the sure and certain

hope of the resurrection.

This Easter Friday is not like Good Friday. Easter Friday is a day of joy. Easter Friday is a day of celebration. Easter Friday is a day to join with Mary and all the witnesses of the resurrection to rejoice in the gift of eternal life from God our Savior.

Prayer: Almighty God, You provided your Son with an earthly mother and family. We thank you for the families in which you have placed us. We pray today that you would shower your blessings upon our families and loved ones and grant to us the joy of knowing that we will one day join in the resurrection with our brother Jesus and all our brothers and sisters in Christ; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Easter Saturday

### Awake, My Heart, with Gladness – 6, 7

Now I will cling forever  
To Christ, my Savior true;  
My Lord will leave me never,  
Whate'er He passes through.  
He rends death's iron chain;  
He breaks through sin and pain;  
He shatters hell's grim thrall;  
I follow Him through all.

He brings me to the portal  
That leads to bliss untold,  
Whereon this rhyme immortal  
Is found in script of gold:  
"Who there My cross has shared  
Finds here a crown prepared;  
Who there with Me has died  
Shall here be glorified."

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**L** Christ is Risen!

**C** His is Risen indeed! Alleluia!

**L** In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

**C** Amen.

**L** The Lord has brought you to a land flowing with milk and honey, Alleluia!

**C** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise, Alleluia! Alleluia! (Exodus 3:8; Ps. 51:15)

**L** Oh give thanks to the Lord; call upon his name,

**C** make known his deeds among the peoples!

(Psalm 105:1)

## Psalm 92:1-5

<sup>92:1</sup> It is good to give thanks to the Lord,

to sing praises to your name, O Most High;

<sup>2</sup> to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night,

<sup>3</sup> to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre.

<sup>4</sup> For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.

<sup>5</sup> How great are your works, O Lord! Your thoughts are very deep!

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;

**as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

### **Matthew 28:1-10**

<sup>28:1</sup> Now after the Sabbath, toward the dawn of the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. <sup>2</sup> And behold, there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven and came and rolled back the stone and sat on it. <sup>3</sup> His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow. <sup>4</sup> And for fear of him the guards trembled and became like dead men. <sup>5</sup> But the angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. <sup>6</sup> He is not here, for he has risen, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. <sup>7</sup> Then go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and behold, he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him. See, I have told you.” <sup>8</sup> So they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to tell his disciples. <sup>9</sup> And behold, Jesus met them and said, “Greetings!” And they came up and took hold of his feet and worshiped him. <sup>10</sup> Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee, and there they will see me.”

On the seventh day of creation God rested. In order to commemorate this day, God commanded people of the Old Testament to do no work but to rest on the seventh day. Over time, rabbis developed strict rules regarding what constituted work and therefore what was prohibited on the Sabbath. One day Jesus and His disciples were walking along a path. Grain was hanging over the path and his disciples were eating it (Matthew 12:1-8). When the Pharisees saw it, they said to him, “Look, your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath.” According to their interpretation of the Sabbath law even casually picking grain and eating it as you walked along was considered work.

To this day you will discover surprising Sabbath regulations. In Israel our hotel had a “Sabbath elevator.” On Saturday this elevator automatically stopped at every floor and opened the door continuously throughout the day. Why? So no one would have to push a button on the Sabbath.

In the dining room of our hotel, olives were served at every meal. But the only day that pitted olives were served was Saturday. Even removing the pit from an olive was deemed to be work by their Sabbath interpretation.

For us Christians, who live in the light of the New Testament, things are different. We no longer are required to observe the Sabbath laws of the Old Testament. Why? Because Jesus is our Sabbath rest!

The Apostle Paul writes, “Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink, or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the substance belongs to Christ (Colossians 2:16-17).”

All the Old Testament ceremonial regulations have come to an end because they were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer must follow the Old Testament dietary restrictions. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer need to sacrifice lambs or turtle doves. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ, the perfect sacrifice. We no longer observe Old Testament religious festivals. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ. We no longer must worship on Saturday and follow the Old Testament Sabbath laws. Why? They were fulfilled in Christ.

Sabbath means rest. Jesus is our true and complete rest.

The strife is o’er, the battle done;  
Now is the victor’s triumph won;  
Now be the song of praise begun.  
Alleluia!

On that first Saturday following Jesus’ resurrection, it was the first time that God’s people could enjoy true rest on a Sabbath. Jesus had come and completely fulfilled for us all the requirements of the law. We now may really rest from our labors.

Unfortunately, some Christians continue to allow themselves to be bound by the Old Testament ceremonial laws. Pray that they will one day see Jesus as He truly is, our Sabbath rest. Our Sunday worship reflects this wonderful rest that comes to us in Jesus’ resurrection from the dead on that first Easter Sunday. We rejoice that because of His victory we will one day rest in peace in His loving arms for all eternity.

Prayer: Almighty God, You sent your only-begotten Son into the world to fulfill for us all the requirements of Your holy law. We thank and praise You that every day we can enjoy our Sabbath rest because Jesus is our Savior and grants us His peace. Comfort us with this peace during these times of uncertainty and trials of physical isolation and distress; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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