

In the FOOTSTEPS of JESUS



Be In Christ Canada
Holy Week Devotional 2022

Holy Week, or “Passion Week” as it is known in some traditions, is the most sacred week in the Church year. It begins with the commemoration of Christ’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and concludes on Easter Sunday with the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. Along the way is the last supper where Jesus washes the disciples’ feet, the betrayal of Judas, the agony of the Garden of Gethsemane, the arrest, trial, condemnation, and flogging of Jesus, the abandonment of his followers, his cruel death on the cross, his “sayings” from the cross, his burial and ultimately in his resurrection and appearance to those first witnesses. There is so much to take in here and so many stories recorded in scripture of how various people experienced this event that it is almost too much to take in. The events of this week call for us to pause and ponder their meaning both then and now.

The word that has always come to mind concerning Holy Week is “bittersweet.” Bittersweet is something that is both bitter and sweet at the same time - pleasant but including or marked by elements of suffering or regret. It is a constant mingling of two opposing feelings - one which is good and the other which is bad - both joy and pain. Holy week is like that - the sadness of betrayal and suffering and the love of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet, loving, and then rising again. There is the disappointment we feel over someone like Judas and yet the hopefulness of the thief on the cross who, in his dying moments, reaches out to Jesus. Nicodemus experiences significant heart change and people sleeping while Jesus’s heart is breaking. There is a mother who watches her son die in a terrible way and some women who are the first to take in the resurrection. In Holy Week, your heart is on a roller coaster of emotion.

Each year as a denominational Be In Christ family, we invite several writers from our community to put thought to paper and help us process all this in a journey of reflection. This year we have added some pictures from modern-day Israel taken on a pre-covid trip to that area. It is our sincere prayer that these reflections will serve as an encouragement to you in your Easter observances this year and that your faith might be reawakened in this most holy space.

Yours in the hope of Easter,

Charles Mashinter
Executive Director - Be In Christ Church Of Canada



St. Peter of Gallicantu, Jerusalem



Mount Precipice, Nazareth

Table of Contents

NOTE FROM CHARLIE MASHINTER ~ P.2
Executive Director | Be In Christ Church Of Canada

PALM SUNDAY ~ P.10
Luke 19:28-38 | Kenol & Rachel Bernard

THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS ~ P.12
Luke 20:1-47 & Luke 22:1-5 | Lisa Goetze

PASSOVER & THE LAST SUPPER ~ P.17
Luke 22:7-30 | Corinne Jones-Chua

PETER'S DENIAL ~ P.20
Luke 22:31-34, 54-62 | Jacob & Leidy Paul

JESUS STANDS TRAIL BEFORE PILATE ~ P.22
Luke 23:1-24 | Eric Versluis

THE CRUCIFIXION ~ P.24
Luke 23: 26-43 | Jeremy Tyrrell

JESUS' DEATH & BURIAL ~ P.26
Luke 23:44-56 | Matt & Bobbi Vincent

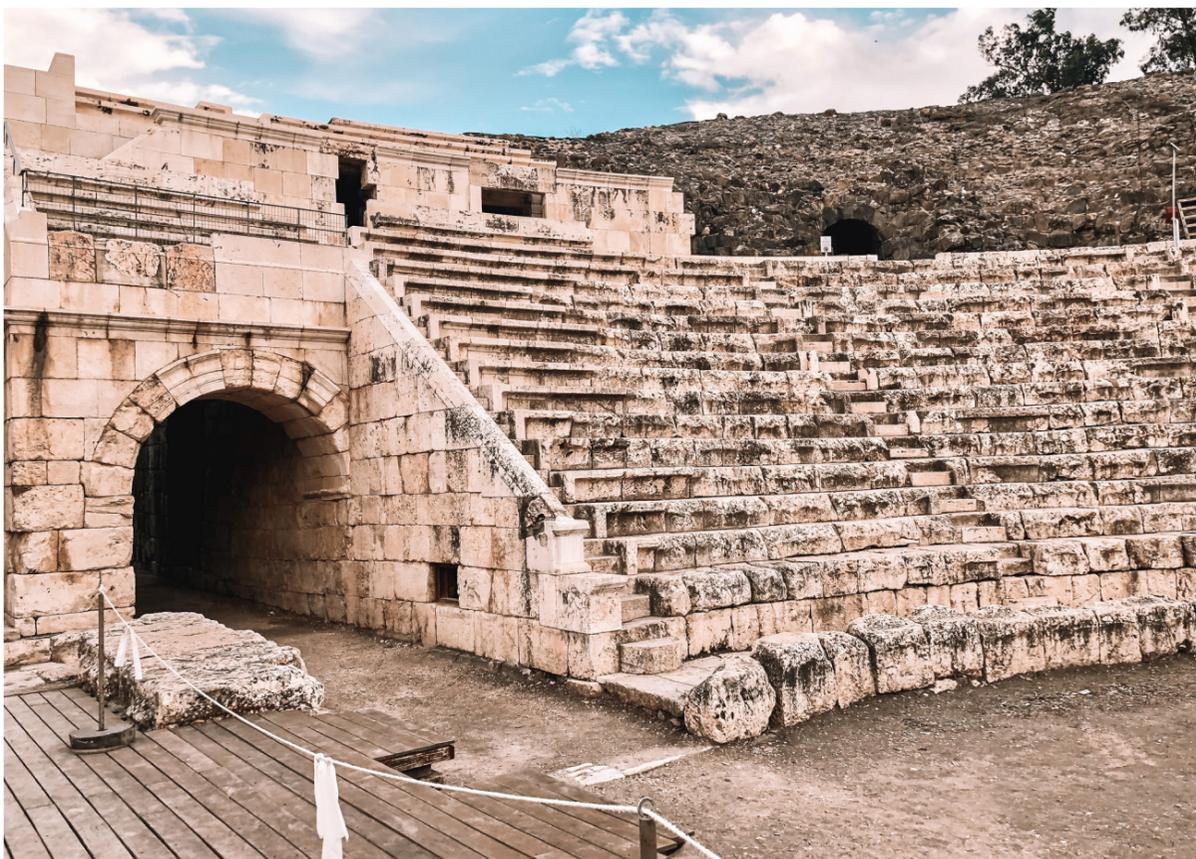
JESUS RISES FROM THE DEAD ~ P.30
Luke 24:1-53 | Dean Morris

APOSTLES CREED ~ P.32
With an Anabaptist Comma'

I BELIEVE ~ P.37
Written by | Jonathan David & Melissa Helser



Masada, Judean Desert



Top left image | Jerusalem

Bottom left image | Amphitheatre in Caesarea

Top right image | Church in Tel Aviv

Palm Sunday | Celebration in Grief

APRIL 10TH | LUKE 19:28-38 | KENOL AND RACHEL BERNARD

Our story begins today with Jesus giving his disciples rather strange instructions, “Go to the next village and look for a donkey tethered by the road. It’ll be a colt, not yet broken for riding. Untie him and bring him here. If anyone asks you what you are doing, say, “The Lord needs him.”

This part of the story could easily be looked over, but it’s in the scriptures for a reason, so let’s pause here and see what we can learn.

We can first pull out of this that Jesus knows what’s to come. He knew where the donkey was, and he knew the disciples would be questioned when they untied the donkey. In Luke 22, we are also told that he knew about the painful death he would endure, but let’s not jump ahead.

We also learn from this part of the story that Jesus knew who he was and walked in spiritual authority. He knew the simple words, “The Lord needs him.” would carry his authority and allow the disciples to take the donkey without resistance.

When the disciples return with the donkey, Jesus hops on its back, and they begin the exciting journey into Jerusalem. Let’s take a moment and imagine the scene. It’s a bright

sunny day; people sing and dance in the streets celebrating Jesus’ entry to Jerusalem as their king. When the moment’s excitement hits the disciples, they burst into enthusiastic praise for the mighty works they have witnessed. As they walk the crowd grows larger as people peek out their windows to see what the fuss is all about. Children pull branches off the palm trees waving them around and singing praise to welcome Jesus. Men and women alike join in on the fun, throwing coats and palm branches down over the path for Jesus, their version of rolling out the red carpet. This jubilant atmosphere is contagious; everyone you see is smiling and laughing.

I imagine Jesus woke up that morning feeling heavy with the knowledge of what is to come, but here he is now being welcomed as a king surrounded by joyous celebration, smiling faces, songs, and laughter. I see Jesus throwing his head back, laughing, smiling, and waving to the children running towards him enthusiastically waving their palm branches.

I imagine Jesus looking down and the adorable fluffy hair of the colt with a smile, knowing this is fulfilling another prophecy about his coming. The donkey was an essential part of this celebration as we see in Zachariah 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout

aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

Jesus was able to celebrate this moment. He was able to enter into joy even though he knew what lay ahead for him. His joy on this day is pure.

Ponder:

Can we be like Jesus in this way? Can we celebrate the good moments God gives us today, even when we know challenges may lie ahead? Can you find joy today even if you woke up this morning with a heavy heart?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, we celebrate you today. We welcome you as our king, come and reign in our hearts. You are worthy of our praise. Help us to celebrate the many gifts and joyful moments you give us. Help us not worry about the future but instead trust you to lead us and keep us safe in your presence. Let this day be filled with love and laughter amidst the grief we may be feeling. You are the joy giver; may your joy be our strength today.

Amen.

The Church of the Beatitudes, Mount of
Beatitudes, Northern Israel

The Betrayal of Jesus

APRIL 11TH | LUKE 20:1-47 & LUKE 22:1-5 | LISA GOETZE

We've just spent Sunday joining others in deep praise, adoration, and celebration of the coming King! Today, we spin around like a quick u-turn in the opposite direction.

In Luke 20, we are introduced to a new setting in the temple courts, where Jesus is telling people about the good news of God's leadership...

Imagine yourself standing there as an onlooker. You've been waving branches and shouting 'Hosanna - God saves' at the top of your lungs with hundreds of others. And now you're overhearing a debate between Jesus, whom you love and follow, with the priests and teachers of the faith you've grown up with.

Slowly read Luke 20:1-8.

As you read the exchange in these verses, are you surprised? Curious? Confused?

What you might notice quickly is that Jesus doesn't seem threatened by the questions thrown his way. Instead, as is his form, Jesus responds with his question to dig into the heart of the one asking. In verse 6, we read that the chief priests and teachers of the law are afraid. The adjective "afraid" or something similar comes up four times in today's passages as the leaders and priests figure out how to get rid of Jesus. What are they afraid of? In a few of the instances, the author tells us the leaders are afraid of the people, the crowds who are drawn into, following and affirming what Jesus is saying. Can the leaders risk getting rid of this beloved Jesus without causing a revolt against themselves? Let's keep imagining ourselves there, listening to this back and forth between Jesus and the religious leaders.

Continue to read Luke 20:9-47.

It's a long chunk of scripture and holds some clues as to what Jesus is thinking in the midst of it all. The series of questions from the leaders put the authority of Jesus under the microscope: who says you can make these changes to our religious practice, which flows into all parts of our Jewish society? Who made you God!?! True to his fashion, Jesus answers the heart of their veiled question with a story. It's a story about a vineyard owner who sends servant after servant to those working the fields, hoping they will give the servants some grapes from the vine - or perhaps even some ready-to-drink wine. Instead, the workers beat up the servants. Until the final servant shows up and the workers go to extreme measures:

'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. (Luke 20:14-15)

The vineyard workers wanted what was shared among many people, all for themselves. They want all the inheritance for themselves. The religious leaders are caught speechless; they know that Jesus is talking about them, their motives, and their fears of losing the illusion of control they have. When we reach Luke 22, the writer makes us aware that the religious leaders are afraid of the people and their allegiance to Jesus. What exactly are they worried about? What would you be worried about if someone was overhauling most of the things you held to be true?

The leaders find their target. Not Jesus himself just yet. But one of the twelve men following Jesus closely, Judas, a disciple. In Luke 22, Judas decides to betray Jesus. For what, some money? At least that's what appears at face value of Judas' agreement with the leaders. But usually, there's a real, deeper, inner thing happening behind what the rest of the world sees.



Pool of Bethesda, Jerusalem



Fear. Doubt. Control. Keep the peace.

Jesus, God with us, doesn't appear surprised or shocked by what is happening in the lead up to his death. We'll see later this week that his awareness doesn't remove the pain, heartbreak, or 'is there a way I can get out of this' humanity of Jesus. Yet as Christ, the saving one, he'll rewrite the story to show that surrendering to the love of others dismantles our fear of not being in control and isolated from God and others.

Ponder:

What decisions have I made out of an impulse to protect myself? Or to avoid hardship in my life? For self-preservation in unknown or trying circumstances? Allow the Holy Spirit to point out these places in your life gently. How can you invite Jesus' example of not being afraid and knowing his identity to form how you respond to challenges?

Prayer:

Let it be so, Father, Son, and Spirit.
You see me where I am
In my physical space
And where I am in my mental and emotional space too.

Meet me there.
Quiet the parts of me that you want to quiet.
And amplify the parts you want to be heard.

In those moments, your Spirit quickens me
To recognize that I'm closing myself off
Or protecting myself from hardship, struggle, and sacrifice
Would you help me reposition myself on the path toward Jesus?
In a posture of surrender, generosity, and a willingness to serve
Those people who are close to me
And those who are more like strangers.

To you be the glory, honour, and power
Forever and ever.
Amen. Let it be so.

Church of All Nations, Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem



Beit She'an, Jordan Valley

Passover & the Last Supper

APRIL 12TH | LUKE 22:7-30 | CORINNE JONES-CHUA

Jesus had been preparing for this night, dropping hints to his disciples about what would come. Now that the Passover meal is approaching, he invites Peter and John to prepare. Once again, things happen exactly as Jesus said they would, and the Passover arrangements are made.

As Jesus and his dearest friends recline at the table in a borrowed room, Jesus says, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” In a moment, everything will change. But he’s been looking forward to this time with them, even in the shadow of suffering and in the presence of his betrayer. Jesus doesn’t waste time trying to avoid what’s coming; he doesn’t waste energy on bitterness but walks forward with purpose.

The Passover meal was a time to remember Israel’s exodus from slavery in Egypt. The blood of a lamb was wiped on door frames to protect the inhabitants of that home from death. The meal celebrated God’s covenant with his people because he caused death to pass over them and led them to freedom. Jesus grew up celebrating Passover every year, and now he does something new. From now on, his followers will remember him when they break bread together. From now on, God has established a new covenant, not in the blood of lambs but through the blood of Jesus. Israel was freed from an oppressive empire; now, Jesus makes way for all people to be free.

While Jesus makes this divine proclamation, the disciples miss the point. Instead of pondering the implications of this new covenant, they argue over who among them is the greatest! If Jesus were inclined to roll his eyes, this would be the moment. The disciples are caught up in the systems of this world, desiring power, prestige, and wealth. They’ve not realized that these same systems made possible their slavery to Egypt or their current occupation by Rome. These hierarchical systems that lift some high while pushing others low are the same systems Jesus came to break.

“The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that,” Jesus patiently explains. Yet, he knows that explanations aren’t enough. To imagine a new reality, the disciples need to witness an alternative. The chief priests and teachers of the law might have been the ones to reveal God’s heart to the people, but they too were co-opted by the evil systems of the world, exploiting their positions to gain more power. So, Jesus steps down from heaven, walks among his creation, and calls followers to teach them a new way of living.

The task of a disciple is not merely to believe all the theology and ethics taught by their rabbi (teacher). The task of a disciple is to become like their rabbi, adopting his attitude, behaviour, and heart. To their fight over who is the greatest, Jesus responds, “I am among you as one who serves.” Jesus—the most powerful man on earth, who controls the elements, brings the dead to life, and has angel armies awaiting his command—uses his power to give life to others. Jesus is not a vulnerable man being overpowered by another. When he freely gives his body and blood, he exposes the facade of the enemy.

As Jesus reclines at the table with his friends, he faces betrayal, rejection, denial, agony, and injustice. Yet, when most people would react with anger, bitterness, vengeance, and violence, Jesus remains patient, prayerful, peaceful, and generous. Jesus has nothing to prove. Rather than lash out to protect himself, he lays down his life to protect others.

When we look around the world today, our hearts are torn in many directions. The fight for power, prestige, and wealth still rages on. It’s a beautiful but broken world, and we long for the day when Jesus will reign on earth as in heaven. Jesus, too, isn’t satisfied until heaven and earth unite. During their last meal, he tells his close friends that he will not eat or drink the fruit of the vine again until the kingdom of God comes. He could simply await that future date enjoying the bliss of his kingdom, knowing his sacrifice is paid, and his job is done. But, instead, he leans into our suffering as he has always done. He has not forgotten our plight for a moment, and he longs to be united with us.

We often pray, “Come, Lord Jesus.” Perhaps Jesus is whispering, “I will. I am. And I am with you now. Remember me.”

Ponder:

How does the self-sacrificial love of Jesus challenge some values you’ve taken for granted?

Prayer:

Jesus, I love you as my Saviour, and I choose to follow you as my Lord. Teach me to be your disciple and align my being with your mind and heart. I choose to follow in your footsteps. May I walk alongside you as one who serves. Amen.

Capernaum, Sea of Galilee



Peter's Denial | A Friend's Betrayal

APRIL 13TH | LUKE 22:31-34, 54-62 | JACOB & LEIDY PAUL

If you knew you would betray a friend, would that make it easier to deal with after it happened?

“Peter, let me tell you something. Before the rooster crows tomorrow morning, you will deny three times that you even know me.”

These words must have cut deep. Peter had just started his devotion to Jesus only to be told that he would betray Jesus that evening. Peter went from boisterous bravado to silence. There is no reply from him in the text. He was just told he would betray his teacher, Rabbi, and friend. Maybe he did say something, but in the text, Jesus moves on. We, as humans, are so fragile. So many times, we think we have the answer, we think we know ourselves, and then God reminds us that he knows us better than we know ourselves. Peter had said he was willing to die or go to prison, but he denied his friend three times when the stakes were high. Three times he

rejected the opportunity to align himself with Jesus. After the third denial, Jesus looked at Peter, and that is when something inside of Peter broke. He no longer felt worthy, no longer felt like he belonged to Jesus, and he fled from his presence. He went back to his old trade.

No longer a disciple.

No longer a friend of Jesus.

Sometimes this is a familiar feeling in our journeys with Jesus. We let him down. We deny him every time we don't love others as we love ourselves. And yet, Jesus does not give up on us.

If you knew a friend would betray you, would that make it hurt any less?

Jesus knew. He always knows. That does not make it any easier. Fully God/fully human, he must have still wished that Peter would not deny him, and after it



happened, he must have still felt the full sting of disappointment. He was falsely accused, arrested, awaiting a terrible death, and humanly alone, he looked at Peter. One can only imagine what was conveyed in that look, but it must have been gut-wrenching. Knowing a terrible future does not make it easier to deal with betrayal. Maybe you have turned your back on someone, or someone has turned their back on you. It can wreck you. Jesus watched on as one of his closest friends turned his back and ran away.

Before Jesus told Peter that all of this would happen, he also told Peter how it would end:

“But I have pleaded in prayer for you, Simon, that your faith should not fail. So when you have repented and turned to me again, strengthen your brothers.”

Our God is a God of reconciliation, restoration, and transformation. Instead of leaving Peter to his guilt, he found him fishing and cooked him a meal. He confronted Peter in love and changed his life forever. Our son has a beautiful book called “A Friend Who Forgives” which says:

“And since Peter had said he didn't know Jesus three times, Jesus gave Peter the chance to say three times,

‘I love you, Jesus.’” With each “I love you,” Peter's sense of identity in Jesus was restored. This would transform Peter into a man who loved Jesus and loved others. Jesus knew. He always knows.

Ponder:

Have you ever been betrayed by someone? Have you ever felt betrayed? How did Jesus use that to draw you closer to Him?

Close your eyes, take a deep breath and ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart.

Prayer:

Abba Father,

Thank you for mending broken hearts. Your love is what we need. Transform our hearts so that we can be more and more like Jesus. Give us grace and mercy to forgive. Thank you, Jesus, for your example of a friend who forgives and restores. Please help us to do the same. Guard our hearts against bitterness and judgment. Renew our minds. We need you and love you. Amen.

Bottom left image | Katzrin Village, Northern Israel
Top right image | Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

Jesus Stands Trial Before Pilate

APRIL 14TH | LUKE 23:1-24 | ERIC VERSLUIS

Of the thousands of words attributed to Jesus in the NIV translation of the Bible, only four appear in this passage. On trial for his life before Pilate and Herod, Jesus put himself on mute. It's odd. Why did he not take this golden opportunity to share his message with the two most powerful men in the country?

Why did he not perform some miracles, convince them of his divinity and turn these influencers into disciples?

Jesus could have taken over the country with the right sales pitch and a few supernatural demonstrations. So why did he say nothing? I wonder if Jesus got a sense of déjà vu when Pilate asked him if he was the king of the Jews? When Herod demanded that he perform a miracle, did Jesus feel like he had been there before? Because I imagine Jesus was having flashbacks to those days spent in the desert, back before hardly anyone knew who he was. Before the miracles. Before the crowds.

In Luke 4, there's a story about how Jesus went on a spiritual retreat. After 40 days of fasting, Jesus was visited by Satan, who offered him all of the power in the world. Everyone in the world would follow him. This is what Jesus wanted. Is it not? No. Jesus recognized that the powers of this world are just the powers of manipulation, violence, and control. Even though every person would be his disciple, they would do so out of fear, not free will. You cannot use evil means to accomplish righteous ends. So Jesus resists the offer to become the king of the world and instead chooses to launch his ministry with a radically different mission statement:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me because he has anointed me, to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." (Luke 4:18-19)

From the beginning, Jesus was clear that he had come to lead a movement of the marginalized, not the powerful. By the time he stands in front of Pilate, his reputation as a "friend of sinners" has been well earned through countless meals and conversations shared with the very people that men like Pilate and Herod exploited for profit. The accusations of the Chief Priests against Jesus are correct. He has been stirring up "people

all over Judea by his teaching." (Luke 23:5) He has been rallying people to join a new Kingdom, one ruled by love instead of manipulation and fear. But neither Herod nor Pilate recognized Jesus as a threat to their power because the revolution he began did not look like any revolution they could imagine. There was no army. No political manoeuvring. No backroom bribes. And yet, at the moment these powerful men are ridiculing Jesus, the revolution is already underway, and there is nothing they can do to stop it.

While Jesus is silent, a man born blind is telling the story of how Jesus healed his sight. (John 9) While Jesus is silent, a leper is sharing how Jesus restored him to the community. (Luke 5:12-15) While Jesus is silent, a Samaritan woman talks to her neighbours about the man who knew everything she had ever done and still treated her as an equal. (John 4) While Jesus is silent, the mustard seed of a movement full of fishermen, women, and social outsiders that will change the course of human history has already taken root.

Jesus remains quiet, not out of fear or because he has nothing to say, but as an act of revolutionary resistance. He refuses to play the "game of thrones" that everyone else is engaged in. His silence serves to expose the impotence of the power that Pilate and Herod hold. For all of his status, Pilate cannot make Jesus talk. For all his wealth, Herod cannot make Jesus perform a miracle. Jesus does not fear them, and so they cannot control him. All they can do is mock and dismiss him.

Contrast Jesus' silent resolve with Pilate's cowardice and capitulation. Even though he believes Jesus to be harmless, Pilate compromises his principles in the face of the chanting crowd. Pilate does not hold power. The mob does. But the power of the mob is the power of violence, and, as we read a little later in the story, there are powers even greater than death. The silence of Jesus inspires me to consider how I can resist the powers that seem to dominate our world today. It can feel like the only way to resist violence is with more violence. It can feel like there is no alternative to participation in unjust systems. But the silence of Jesus in the face of Pilate shows us that there are powers greater than the weapons of fear and control.

As 2 Corinthians 10:4 puts it, "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

"The invitation of Jesus to
"Come, follow me." Is a call to
join his radical revolution."



As I'm writing this, my news feed is filled with videos of unarmed Ukrainian civilians standing in front of tanks and soldiers. Their courageous resistance seems to have inspired a cynical world to take heart that the powers of violence and exploitation are not inevitable.

We can resist the powers of greed through acts of generosity and gratitude. We can resist the powers of violence through acts of selflessness and reconciliation. We can resist the powers of fear through acts of love and compassion. We can resist the powers of manipulation through acts of honesty and vulnerability. We can resist the powers of control through acts of justice and liberation.

The invitation of Jesus to "Come, follow me" is a call to join his radical revolution.

Will you resist?

Ponder:

What are some practical ways to resist the powers of greed, violence, fear, manipulation, and control in your life today? What are some ways to intentionally participate in Jesus' revolution of love?

Prayer:

Jesus. The powers of this world can feel overwhelming. Thank you for resisting and exposing them for us so that we can trust that love is the greatest power of all. Since perfect love casts out fear, help us to abide in your love so that we may have the courage to stand up against the powers that seek to manipulate, exploit and destroy us today.

Old City Jerusalem

The Crucifixion

APRIL 15TH | LUKE 23:26-43 | JEREMY TYRRELL

“Who? Me?” I quickly glanced over each shoulder in desperation, hoping it wasn’t my attention the officer was trying to get. The crowd around me had averted their eyes and were staring at the ground, trying to distance themselves from the unfolding situation. I hoped and wished, “Please! No! Anyone but me.”

Things were happening too quickly even to begin to comprehend what was going on.

Two soldiers had swept in beside me and were now pulling me from the crowd. My heart was pounding as I slowly realized it was indeed my attention that the commanding Roman officer was demanding. He shouted instructions as the soldiers dragged me forward. While everything in me urged me to run, it would be foolish to resist. What Rome demands, Rome gets.

The two soldiers picked up the wooden cross, and I realized the task I had been appointed. The procession I had come to witness, I now found myself thrust in the middle of. I braced myself as the soldiers dropped the cross onto my shoulders and commanded me to walk. The weight of the cross strained my neck and back as I dragged it forward. There is no comfortable way to carry a cross, and there was no way out. I clenched my jaw as I plodded my way forward.

The officers’ attention directed towards me waned as I marched forward in the procession. I slowly became more aware of my surroundings. I was in the middle of a literal death march that would end up at the place of the skull, an ominous name that aptly described the kinds of things that happened there.

It was in this moment that I took in the sight of Jesus. I had heard the stories of Jesus, of people being healed and food being multiplied. It was why I had come. Who was this Jesus? Now, I was closer than I wanted to be, as Jesus limped in front of me, straining to stay upright and keep himself moving forward. His back and legs were lacerated, and blood and puss oozed out. It was no wonder he could no longer carry the cross. The streets were lined with onlookers as curious as I was about the identity of this man. Was he the chosen one? A crowd marched behind us, with the wailing cries of grieving women ringing in my ears.

Who was this Jesus who had drawn the ire of Rome, sparked the curiosity of the crowds, and earned the loyalty of these heartbroken women?

I was lost in these questions and almost didn’t realize the officer in front of me had stopped in his tracks and was again demanding my attention. Finally, we had arrived at the place of the skull, and he ordered me to drop the cross and then dismissed me of my duty. I was relieved as my tension eased and life returned to my strained muscles. I joined the crowd of onlookers curiously drawn to this ‘King of the Jews.’

The soldiers laid Jesus against the cross. They stretched out his arms as the executioner knelt and lined up the spike to Jesus’ wrist. I cringed as I looked away right before hearing the clang of the hammer, immediately followed by the agony of Jesus. After being nailed to the cross, Jesus was drawn upright between two other criminals on his right and left.

The soldiers’ work, for now, was done. All there was left to do was wait. They entertained themselves by making fun of Jesus and gambling for his clothes. They demanded a miracle to prove he was someone different from the dozens of criminals whose deaths they had overseen.



Suspended Orange Tree, Tel Avivi-Yafo

Others in the crowd jeered Jesus too. ‘If he saved others, why can’t he save himself?’ ‘Come on, Jesus, prove to us who you really are.’ Even one of the criminals hoping for a last-second stay of execution shouted at Jesus to prove himself and rescue all three of them from impending death.

It was then I noticed the group of grieving women holding each other as they watched their friend die.

Jesus didn’t have to prove himself to them. They were already convinced he was someone special. I made my way towards them, not wanting to intrude but drawn by the love they had for Jesus.

As I got close, I turned back to Jesus and saw his lips move as he lifted his eyes to heaven. He was praying, but the words were hard to hear. Then, almost instinctively, I spoke out loud in the direction of the women. “What did he say?” The women turned around. “Pardon me? Were you speaking to us?” The words stumbled out of my mouth. “Yes. Sorry. I mean, Jesus seemed to be talking. Or praying. I was just wondering what he said.”

The woman looked at Jesus and then back at me. Her eyes were filled with the same kind of grace and determination I had seen in Jesus. She said, “Yes. I heard his words and have heard them countless times before. He said, ‘Father, forgive them.’”

Ponder:

Who do you identify with in the crucifixion story (The crowd? The criminal? The soldiers? The women? Simon?)
Are you in need of God’s forgiveness today?

Prayer:

Lord Jesus,
In love, you suffered and died for the sake of the world, including me. Thank you for your forgiveness, mercy, and love. Amen.

Jesus Death & Burial

APRIL 16TH | LUKE 23:44-56 | MATT & BOBBI VINCENT

Sometimes Scripture can feel like only a collection of words on a page. It can be hard to get a fresh perspective on what we're reading, especially if we've read the passage many times over the years. So today, we invite you to use your imagination. Of course, we still read the verses, but we also can use our imaginations to try and understand what was going on. We've become pretty good at engaging logic and intellect in our study and understanding of God. Still, in doing so, we run the risk of shutting down other parts of ourselves, being suspicious, and not trusting that even our emotions and feelings can lead us into deeper connection and understanding. The fear is not that we use our imaginations too much, but that we don't use them enough in our attempt to understand God and allow Scripture to transform us. So join us as we try and use our imaginations and experience this text in a new way, drawing out a few key moments from the story. Let's wonder together what these last few hours of Jesus' life must have been like and sit in the immediate reactions of those around him.

Creation Participates In The Moment

What must it have been like to have the sun stop shining and for there to be hours of darkness over the land? Jesus is hanging on the tree, but is he able to notice through the pain that even the sun and sky join him at this moment? Try and imagine the scene. Jesus has been nailed to a cross, the sun has stopped shining, and darkness covers the whole land. While some people hurl insults, others must be whispering to each other about these strange things happening. In these last moments of Jesus' life, even creation joins in. It's as if the very sun and sky mirror the pain, torture, and significance of what is happening. And just as Jesus is about to utter his last words, back in the inner sanctuary of the Temple, the curtain is torn in two. Creation and physical structures participate in the final moments of a loving God giving himself for others. What must that have been like?

Committed Until The End

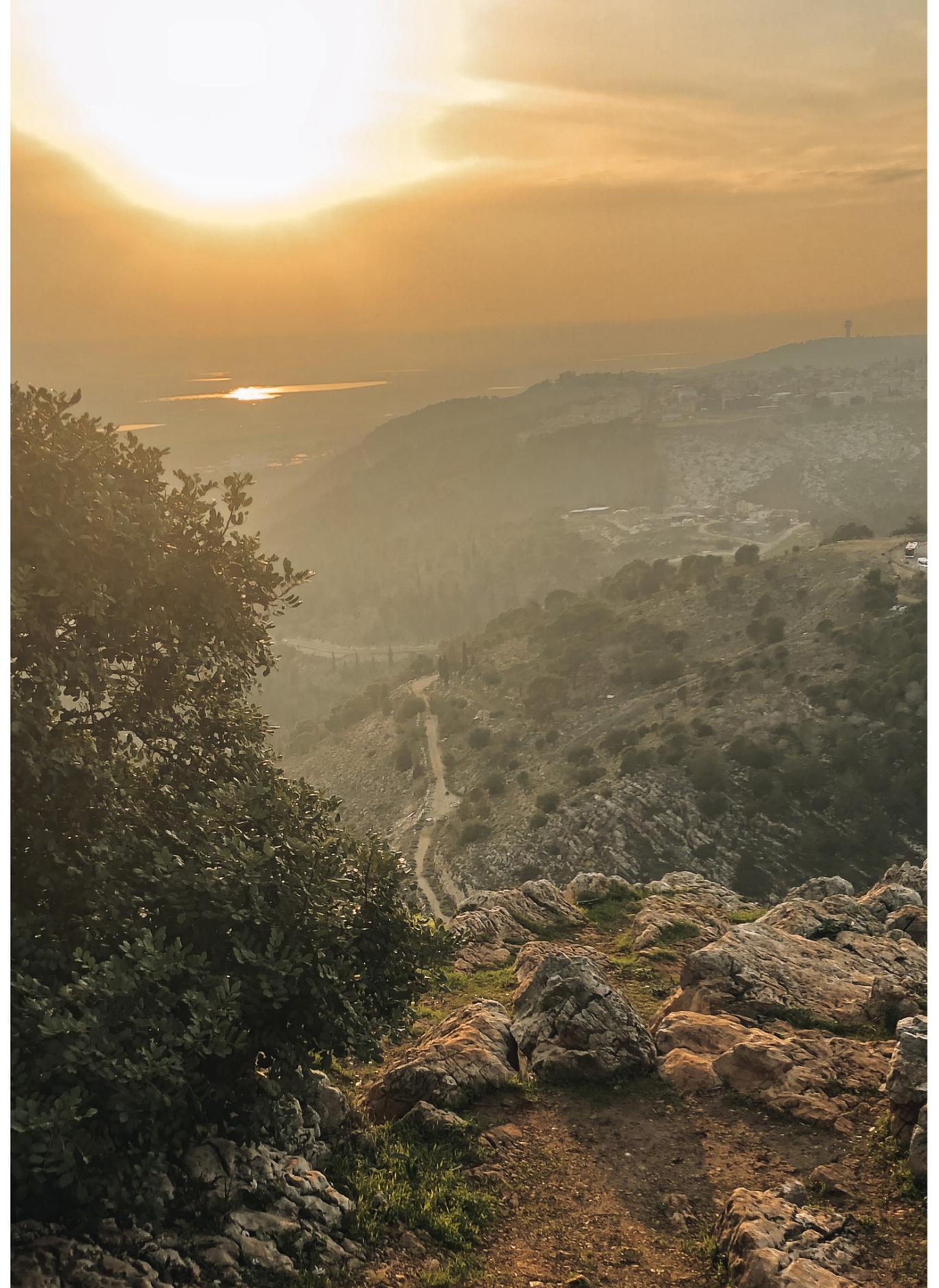
Do you think Jesus ever wrestled with doubt? What might have been going through his head in those hours leading up to his arrest, trial, and crucifixion. Do you think he was scared? We know that prior to his arrest, Jesus wrestled with the task in front of him. We read of his extended moments of prayer in the garden, discovering it was a time of great anguish where he admitted his desire for another way but committed to aligning himself with the will of the Father (see Luke 22:41-44). Can you imagine struggling in prayer like this?

As he hangs on the cross in agony, Jesus demonstrates his trust and commitment to the way of God by surrendering his life and spirit into the hands of the Father. What an incredible demonstration of God's extravagant love and the deep trust in Jesus. As he breathes his last, he gives himself to reveal his confidence in the loving Father. Jesus is fully aligned and committed, laying down his life and remaining faithful until the end.

The Long Wait

Waiting can be challenging. When we are forced to sit back and not able to push our agenda or plan forward, it can prove to be a struggle. Do you wonder what this waiting period must have been like for these courageous women? We read of their presence and observance at the site of the crucifixion. Their commitment was to follow Jesus as he was laid in the tomb by Joseph of Arimathea and then prepare spices and perfumes so they could adequately care for his body. But they need to follow the rules of the Sabbath and wait. We imagine this may have felt like the longest Sabbath they had ever experienced - full of tears, heartache, and questions.

What do you think they were feeling? Try and put yourself in their place. These amazing disciples of Jesus remained present even when others fled. They were willing to sit in pain and had the desire to love and serve Jesus even in his death. What emotions stir in you as you consider these incredible examples of faithfulness and courage?



Mount of Precipice, Nazareth



Left image | Garden Tomb, Jerusalem
Top right image | Caesarea Philippi, Mount Hermon, Israel

Ponder:

What does it look like for you to move forward in deeper trust and confidence with our heavenly Father? Is there something preventing you or in the way? How can you work to move forward?

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, we thank you for your sacrifice and love for us poured out on the cross. It is truly the most incredible gift given to all humankind. We also want to express gratitude for how you have created us. We are not only able to read, think and process information, but you have also given us feelings and emotions. Your gift of imagination enables us to envision and go deeper into the text laid before us. Today we pray that we learn what it means to be faithful and trusting, and willing to sit in the waiting periods - even when it is difficult to see your work around us.

We love you, Jesus. Amen.

Jesus Rises from the Dead

APRIL 17TH | LUKE 24:1-53 | DEAN MORRIS

Resurrection day begins in the early hours of the morning. Luke tells us, “very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.” There is something innately special and consequential about the early hours of the morning, for those few natural early risers, or for the rest of us who have to set our alarms to be up ‘before the world gets going’ understand, and have likely experienced the tranquil yet powerful ‘magic’ of those first hours. Whether you are the type to sit quietly in the stillness with a coffee, reading and praying, or you are up and out the door for a run or walk, those morning hours, being up before the sun rises, seem to offer the gift of space, time, and always hold so much potential.

For Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Mary, the mother of James, this particular morning was like none other they had ever experienced. Still, in a state of shock and mourning, the three disciples gathered as the faithful remnant to carefully and lovingly prepare and anoint the broken and lifeless body of Jesus. The words they shared were likely few, given both the gravity of the situation they were preparing for and out of the inherent reverence we feel in the quiet of those soft morning hours. Hushed and forlorn greetings of “Shalom” and “Boker Tov” which mean peace, wholeness, and good morning were likely uttered, more so out of formality and habit than from a place of actually feeling the sentiment of the words they spoke. However, little did they know, even in their subdued greetings, they had already begun proclaiming the mysterious truth of the Resurrection. Not only was Jesus whole and well, embodying the fullness of Shalom, the word they used for the morning, boker means ‘to breakthrough,’ ‘to penetrate,’ ‘to crack’ and refers to the particular time of the day in which the light is ‘breaking through the darkness of the night. The Resurrection is perfectly and poetically suited to these early Holy hours. The sun’s light is unflinching as it breaks over the horizon illuminating our world is precisely the image and metaphor of Resurrection. An unyielding and gratuitous display of light that pours freely over the land, touching everything and everyone turning night into day, darkness into light.

What’s more, Luke tells us this Resurrection was not just a new dawn, but it was also the beginning of an entirely new week. “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning” The symbolism of new beginnings shouldn’t be lost on us here either. Following the pattern of creation, the unfolding reality of the Kingdom of God has been about renewal. But this dawn, this light breaking forth, is an entirely new unfolding of God’s intention to ‘make all things new.’ And buried in the empty tomb was the invitation to step into this new dawn not as observers but as participants. So, Mary, Joanna, and Mary went looking for Jesus, and what they found was a new reality, one where death does not have the final answer, a reality where grave clothes are left aside, and the impossible is possible.

The story that follows this new dawn of the Resurrection is one of disbelief, despair, and doubt. From the disciples who didn’t believe the women to a despondent Cleopas and his companion who walked for miles back to Emmaus with Jesus himself, but couldn’t recognize him, and again even Jesus’ own disciples experienced fear and doubt even when they came face to face with him. But that’s the thing about this first dawn; it was confusing, disorienting, hard to see even, kind of like looking at the light after spending time in darkness. At first, it’s too much to look at, but slowly our eyes adjust, and we come to see all that is illuminated before us.

Of course, the Resurrection happened in the early morning. Quietly, almost without notice.

Of course, a small group of women were the first to catch a glimpse of it.

Of course, it happens while most people are still under the cover of night.

Of course, it happens with no fanfare, big spectacle, or grand announcement.

Just like the sun rises whether we are awake to see it or not. The Resurrection happened, and we are all invited to see it, experience it, and participate in it.

That’s the invitation of the Empty Tomb.
Christ is Risen!



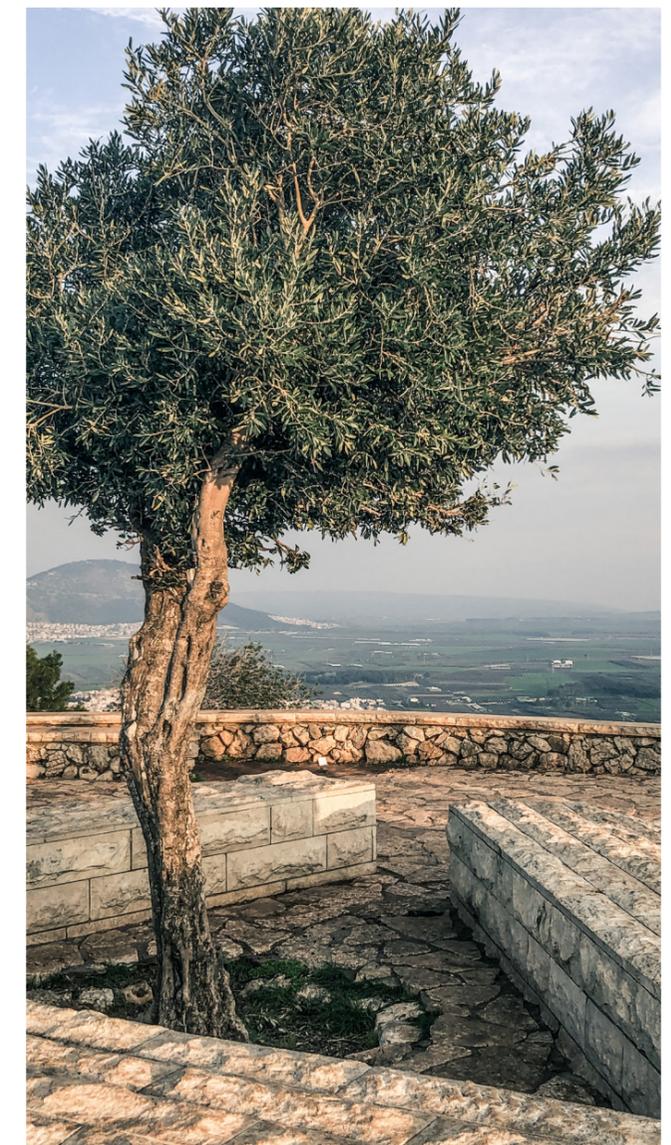
Ponder:

Throughout this Text (Luke 24), the different people see and experience the Resurrection differently. Consider how you have experienced it in your own life? Are there new ways to allow Jesus to reveal the Resurrection to you?

Prayer:

Jesus, we rejoice at your Resurrection! We marvel at the impossible made possible. We celebrate the light breaking through the darkness. Lord, Help our eyes adjust to the dawn’s light of your resurrection life. Please help us to peer with wonder into the empty tomb. Give us strength to live into the invitation you extend us, to partner with you in making all things new. May we live in the holy potential of each new day as ambassadors of Your Kingdom and people of your Resurrection life. Amen.

Top image | Mount of Beatitudes
Bottom image | Mount Precipice, Nazareth



The Apostles Creed with an
Anabaptist Comma'

Liturgy

Disciples:

I believe in God,
The Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ,
God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
Born of the Virgin Mary,

One Disciple:

Who was welcomed by shepherds,

Greeted by Magi,
Pursued by Herod,
Sheltered by Egypt,
Taught by Joseph,
Baptized by John,

Tempted by Satan,
Followed by disciples,
Heard by multitudes,
Understood by the simple,

Despised by clergy,
Praised by lepers,

Hosted by outcasts,
Seen by the blind,
Touched by the ill,

Obeeyed by psychotics,
Rejected by siblings,
Rebuked by Martha,
Embraced by Mary,

Anointed by a prostitute,
Cheered by crowds,

Loved by John,
Hated by the Powers,
Abandoned by all,

Grieved in Gethsemane
Betrayed by disciple,
Denied by Peter,
Arrested by Herod,

Brit She'an, Jordan Valley

Disciples:

Suffered under Pontius Pilate,
Was crucified, died, and was buried;
On the third day, he rose again;
He ascended into heaven,
He is seated on the right hand of the Father,

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
The holy Catholic Church,
The communion of saints,
The forgiveness of sins,
The resurrection of the body,
And the life everlasting.

Written by David Augsburg and his home church,
Emmanuel Mennonite Church as a Liturgy.

The Apostles' Creed says, "I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate . . ." Notice how the creed goes straight from Jesus' birth to his suffering? In between, there's only a comma. Inspired by Walter Brueggemann, who has said through his work, "It's only a comma, but Oh what a comma," David and his home church began to expand on the Apostles Creed with this in mind.

As Anabaptists, we believe these modifications to the Apostles Creed imply the value and transformation that happened through Jesus was not only on the cross but through his life as well.

The Judean Desert





Golan Heights

I Believe

WRITTEN BY JONATHAN DAVID AND MELISSA HELSER

I believe in the blood of Jesus
That washes white as snow
I believe that the power of the
Gospel
Still makes the broken whole
I believe that the curse of sin was
broken
When they rolled away that stone
I believe, I believe, I believe

As I bow before You Lord
I will rise in confidence
I will see Your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in
No matter where I go
And no matter where I've been
I will see your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

I believe that the walls will start
falling
When we fall down on our knees
I believe that the lame will go
walking
And the blind are gonna see
I believe that the gates of hell
tremble
When the church begins to sing
I believe, I believe, I believe

As I bow before You Lord
I will rise in confidence
I will see Your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in
No matter where I go
And no matter where I've been
I will see your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

Sing it to the daughters
Sing it to the sons
To every generation
Look at what the Lord has done
Sing it to the darkness
That the light has come

Sing it to the nations
Look at what the Lord has done

Sing it to the daughters
Sing it to the sons
To every generation
Look at what the Lord has done

Sing it to the darkness
That the light has come
Sing it to the nations
Look at what the Lord has done
Look at what the Lord has done

As I bow before You Lord
I will rise in confidence
I will see Your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

And no matter where I go
And no matter where I've been
I will see your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

As I bow before You Lord
I will rise in confidence
I will see Your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

No matter where I go
And no matter where I've been
I will see your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

I can hear it, I can hear the sound
of the promised land
Oh I can hear it, it's the sound of
redemption
I can feel it in my bones again

It's the sound of the promised land
Can you hear the mothers and
fathers
Can you hear the sons and
daughters

Shouting the praise of God
From one generation to the next
From one generation to the next
From one generation to the next

From one generation to the next
We shout the praise of God

From one generation to the next
Let's sing it to the daughters

Sing it to the daughters
Sing it to the sons
To every generation
Look at what the Lord has done

Sing it to the darkness
That the light has come

Sing it to the nations
Look at what the Lord has done

Sing it to the daughters
Sing it to the sons

To every generation
Look at what the Lord has done

Sing it to the darkness
That the light has come

Sing it to the nations
Just look at what the Lord has done

As I bow before You Lord
I will rise in confidence
I will see Your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in
And no matter where I go
No matter where I've been
I will see your goodness, Lord
In the land I'm livin' in

[LISTEN TO IT HERE: HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=KGIUO3Z2H8O](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KGIUO3Z2H8O)



Israel 2020

All pictures were taken during the BIC Pastors Learning
Tour in January 2020 by Bobbi Vincent.

Visiting the Holy Land and walking in the footsteps of
Jesus was a life changing pilgrimage that will
forever be imprinted on our hearts.

Best She's, Jordan Valley



Church of All Nations, Garden of Gethsemane, Jerusalem

Thank you to all of the writers who contributed to this years Holy Week Guide for BIC Canada. Your devotionals are truly a gift to our BIC Community, thanks again for all of your time and effort.

Special Note | BIC Canada is in the process of planning another Learning Tour to Israel in January 2023, available to all credentialed Pastors and Spouses. For all information regarding this upcoming Learning Tour, please contact Matt Vincent at matt.vincent@beinchrist.ca