



EASTER
at green acres

devotional

The logo for Green Acres Baptist Church features a stylized icon on the left consisting of three horizontal, rounded rectangular bars stacked vertically. To the right of this icon, the words "green acres" are written in a bold, lowercase, sans-serif font. Below "green acres", the words "BAPTIST CHURCH" are written in a smaller, uppercase, sans-serif font.

green acres
BAPTIST CHURCH



© 2026, Green Acres Baptist Church

All Scripture is taken from the Christian Standard Bible (CSB). Scripture quotations marked CSB have been taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers.

gabc.org



EASTER
at green acres

devotional



This Easter Devotional book

is truly an act of God's grace. Last year, our Senior Adult Ministry was asked to begin work on our 2026 Devotional. At first, it seemed overwhelming, until we paused and realized what resources we had within our ministry to do this. We began with our greatest resource, our Senior Adults. Who else in our church had spent the most hours hearing these verses and studying the depth of their meaning? Wisdom comes from the combination of two things: knowledge and experience. These devotionals were written by the healthy "bones" of our church. Enclosed, you will find the majority of the devotionals written by our Senior Adults, then some written by our supportive staff. You will find these devotionals worthy of reading more than once.



IN THE FIRST BEGINNING



Dr. Michael Gossett
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2019

Genesis 3:15 and Galatians 4:4 introduce us to the spiritual battle between God and Satan. They also reveal to us the prophecy of our salvation through the birth of Jesus.

Where does the Easter story begin? Many may say that it begins on the third day when Jesus rose from the grave. Others will say it began at the crucifixion, but it truly begins in a garden that is full of heartbreak. In Genesis 3, sin entered the world through rebellion, the need for autonomy, and a twisting of God's Word. Everything that was once perfect was fractured. The peace of creation was shattered. Shame and separation replaced the joy of walking with God. Yet, even as the first man and woman hid guiltily, God's mercy spoke first.

He made a promise in Genesis 3:15: "I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel." That single sentence is the first gospel announcement. It is the earliest glimpse of Easter. Before there was a cross, there was a curse that God Himself would one day satisfy. Before Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, God was already making a way back in.

I will never forget the day that I first held each of our kids. The day they took their first breath, I looked down at them and was overwhelmed at God's grace and just how small they were. Tiny toes, tiny hands, tiny nose, and a small voice were a reminder each time that the God who created galaxies would one day choose to enter the world through a child that small. Galatians 4:4 tells us that when the time came to completion, God sent His son, born of a woman, born under the law. The promise of Genesis 3:15 became flesh and walked among us.

What began as a tragedy was always meant to end in triumph. From the very start, God was not reacting to sin; He was redeeming it. He was never surprised. He was sovereign. The story of redemption was already written long before we ever reached for the fruit.

Easter reminds us that God's plan of salvation is not an afterthought. It is His eternal purpose. Before we failed, grace was already in motion. Before we ever cried for help, God had already promised a Savior.

Maybe you find yourself today in a place that feels broken. The good news is that God has been redeeming from the very beginning. What feels like the end may be where His greatest work begins. The same God who spoke hope in Eden still speaks hope today.

THERE WILL BE DEATH TO PAY



Fred Smith
GABC Member
Since 1995

*Written by David, **Psalm 22** is a lament to the Lord. It expresses David's deep sorrow and his questioning whether the Lord has forgotten him. **Isaiah 53** is Isaiah's prophecy of the life and death of Jesus, an ordinary man, despised and rejected by not only man, but, seemingly, by God. Prophecy about how he would quietly take our just punishment upon himself to reconcile us to our Heavenly Father*

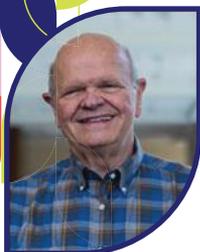
The early Church did not focus, as we often do today, on the excruciating pain and humiliation of the crucifixion. The physical suffering was not central to their message. Unlike many modern sermons and films that dwell on the beatings, blood, and torture of the cross, early believers did not seek shock value or cultivate a morbid fascination with Christ's agony. Their focus was not on the grisly details of death but on something far deeper—the desolation of separation from God. The cry from the cross was not chiefly about physical torment but about Christ's willing removal from the Father, bearing the total alienation of humankind. Just as his temptations in the wilderness were real, so was his sense of utter and eternal loss of the love of the Father.

Today, we emphasize what others did to him, which obscures the truth that he remained in control. Well-intentioned songs tell us, "I'm the one to blame; I caused all his pain," leading to pity or guilt rather than awe and gratitude. We imagine a helpless victim instead of recognizing the deliberate sacrifice of the Son of God. In

urging people to see themselves as the soldiers, thieves, or mockers, we forget that not everyone there crucified him—the women who watched, the disciples, and many others did not. Regardless of personal goodness or evil, all humanity shares the same condition: separation from God. The cross is the only means by which that separation can be overcome. It is what unites us with every soul present that day.

In focusing on horror and guilt, we risk missing the point. Christ's death was neither accidental nor imposed but chosen—at a particular moment, in a particular way. He was not a victim. He died to undo the fall of Adam and to break the inheritance of sin. He died so that we might live and that the world might be reconciled to God; “for God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God.”

IDENTIFYING JESUS



Terry Brannon
GABC Member
Since 1973

Isaiah 11:1-5 is a prophecy about the coming of our Lord, Jesus Christ, who will rise from the House of David. He will be wise and just, but, make no mistake, he will rule with the sword of righteousness.

No one likes surprises. Suppose you just found out today that your mother-in-law is coming next week for two months. “Why didn’t someone tell me?” you ask.

Well, when it comes to the Messiah, the Son of God, it was a poorly kept secret. Prophecies from the Old Testament 600 to 1200 years before Jesus walked our little planet, foretold his coming, his family tree, where he would be born (Micah 5:2), and who would be his mother (Isaiah 7:14). He would be preceded by a messenger (Isaiah 40:3) and perform miracles like healing the blind and making the lame leap (Isaiah 35:5).

Prophets foretold the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Zechariah 9:9), and then they wrote of his rejection by the religious leaders (Psalm 118). They even prophesied the manner of his death: arrest, trial, and crucifixion (Psalm 22). And, finally, they proclaimed the one thing that separates Christianity from all religions – the bodily resurrection from the dead of our Lord. (Psalm 16:8-11, Isaiah 53:10-12). In fact, of the hundreds of prophecies

in the Bible, there are over forty very specific prophecies on the coming, the life, the death, and the resurrection of the Messiah, the one we know to be Jesus of Nazareth.

And yet, first-century religious leaders failed to connect the dots – to recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, though it was written on their very own scrolls. Why, you ask? Going against all evidence and the incredible weight of probability, they rejected Jesus because he did not live up to their own idea of the Messiah. You see, they wanted a Messiah on a white horse, throwing the rascally Romans out and setting Israel up as masters of the universe and themselves on the throne as victors, though that perception is never prophesied in the Old Testament.

But Jesus wasn't that kind of Messiah. As a suffering servant rather than victor, Jesus came the first time that we might be forgiven and, in forgiveness, healed, and healed so that we might live abundantly. He will come again as that victor, maybe on a white horse, but not yet. Don't be surprised.

IN THE SECOND BEGINNING



Jim Gillen
GABC Member
Since 1974

John 1:1-15 ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was with God in the beginning. ³All things were created through him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. ⁴In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.

John opens his Gospel with a profound declaration: Jesus is not just a teacher, prophet, or miracle-worker—He is the eternal Word of God, present from the very beginning. These first fifteen verses of John 1 lift our eyes beyond the physical world and into the mystery of the divine.

The phrase “In the beginning” echoes Genesis 1:1, connecting the creation story with the person of Christ. John wants us to see that Jesus was not a late addition to God’s plan—He is the plan. Everything was made through Him, and without Him, nothing was made. He is both Creator and Sustainer.

John also describes Jesus as “life” and “light.” In a world darkened by sin, confusion, and suffering, Christ shines as the true Light. This Light isn’t just illumination—it is life-giving, revealing, and transforming. No darkness can overcome it. That promise should give us great hope. No matter how heavy the world feels, the light of Christ remains unshaken.

Verses 10-11 are sobering: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.” The tragedy is that the very Creator stepped into His creation, and many missed Him—even rejected Him. But John doesn’t end with rejection. He offers a powerful invitation in verse 12: “But to all who did receive Him...He gave the right to become children of God.”

The Word became flesh (v. 14)—this is the miracle of the incarnation. God didn’t stay distant; He stepped into our reality, full of grace and truth. He came close so we could know Him personally.

Today, reflect on the glory of Christ—the eternal Word who became flesh, the Light that overcomes darkness, and the One who gives us the right to be called children of God. Let that truth stir your heart, strengthen your faith, and renew your wonder.

TURNING WATER INTO WINE



Susan Braymer
GABC Member
Since 2006

*In **John 2:1-11**, Jesus reveals his glory by turning water into wine. Giving it a closer look, we see not only the symbolization of purification but also hints of Jesus predicting his own death on the cross.*

John 2:1-11 recounts the story of Jesus' first miracle at the wedding at Cana, where he turns water into wine. On the surface, it is a loving and gracious act that spares a newlywed couple from public embarrassment. But spiritually, the miracle shows His marvelous love for people and the revelation of His divine and transforming power He has over nature. He turned something ordinary into something extraordinary. The ordinary water was turned into the finest wine ever made. Only Jesus, the King of the Universe, could do that.

When the wine ran out, Mary, Jesus' mother, came to Him and simply stated, *"They don't have any wine."* By transforming water into the finest wine, Jesus demonstrated power over creation and revealed 'a glimpse of His glory, and His disciples believed in him.'

In a deeper way, the miracle at Cana points to the cross and resurrection of Christ. The reference to **"My hour has not yet come"** points to His future suffering, death, and resurrection. Turning water into wine foreshadowed the work of Jesus on the cross, and the wine represents Jesus' blood shed on our behalf for the forgiveness of sins.

The six stone water pots that held water symbolized the Old Covenant system of purification through the Law. It was the daily cleansing ritual that prepared people for worship (outward cleansing), but it could not cleanse the heart. The water pots represent our lives before Christ.

We were created for a purpose, but often we fill our lives with that which cannot satisfy. The miracle points to the fact that Jesus brings a new kind of purification, not by daily ritual washing but through Christ's death on the cross. Jesus's precious blood replaces purification water. Just as water was transformed into wine, the cross becomes the place where death was transformed into life, and sadness into abundant joy. This is the New Covenant, which is one of grace, forgiveness, and eternal life.

The wedding feast also foreshadows the wedding to come. It is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, where Christ receives His Bride, the Church. The wedding celebration is a powerful image of the joyful union between God and His Bride. Just as Jesus supplied the wine at Cana, He supplies everything necessary for our union with Him.

As we approach Easter, bring your empty water pots to Jesus and let Him fill them to the brim with His love and His presence. Jesus, the Bridegroom, saves the very BEST for you.

IF YOU ARE WILLING



Phil Caturan
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2014

Mark 1:40-45 ⁴¹ Moved with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched him. *“I am willing,” he told him. “Be made clean.” ...*

The Bible does not provide details about the background of the leper, whether he was Jew or Gentile, married or single, educated or uneducated. Yet one thing is clear: he believed in Jesus and recognized Him as his only hope. Perhaps he had heard Jesus preach in the synagogues or had witnessed His authority over demons. Whatever he knew, it was enough to move him toward Jesus in faith.

But beyond his faith, we see something equally important: his boldness, vulnerability, and humility. A leper in Jesus’ time was not only considered an outcast but was also viewed as someone cursed by God, which is why they were forced to live in isolation. And yet he came, knelt, and begged Jesus for help.

When he said, “If You are willing, You can make me clean,” he displayed complete confidence in Jesus’ power. He understood that nothing was impossible for Him. Throughout the Gospels, we see countless examples of this power, like turning water into wine, healing the sick, raising the dead, calming storms, feeding thousands, casting out

demons, and even walking on water. Yet the greatest display of His power was His death, burial, and resurrection, rising from the grave after three days. That miracle stands as the pinnacle of all He performed.

Although we do not know which teachings or miracles the leper had encountered, he clearly believed Jesus was his only hope. But belief alone was not enough; he acted on it. He approached Jesus with boldness, knelt in humility, begged, and asked for healing. And Jesus, moved with compassion, responded with the words every desperate heart longs to hear, **“I am willing.”**

What are the things in your life that you are clinging to, trying to control in your own strength? What burdens are you attempting to solve alone while hope quietly fades inside you? Remember the leper’s example, he came, knelt, begged, and asked Jesus with boldness and humility, **“If You are willing...”** And Jesus answered, **“I am willing.”** Because the tomb is empty, which is the greatest demonstration of Jesus’ power, we can fix our eyes on Him. He is our only hope.

OUR FAITH CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Dustin Lee
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2022

Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26 *In these Gospel passages, Jesus heals two men. Each one paralyzed, each one overlooked until they are in the presence of Jehovah-Rapha, the Lord who heals.*

In the Gospels, we see a powerful moment where Jesus responds to a group of friends who were desperate to bring someone they loved into His presence for miraculous healing. It was not their effort that produced the miracle, nor was it their determination that earned His favor. The healing happened because Jesus is compassionate, sovereign, and full of authority. Their faith simply positioned them to witness what only He can do as He restores, forgives, and brings new life.

I am reminded of a season in my own family's life when our daughter Micah went through medical challenges and a hospital stay. As a parent, there is nothing more difficult than watching your child walk through something you cannot fix. During that time, our church family surrounded us with prayer, generosity, and steady support that carried us more than they will ever know. God used their love and faithfulness as reminders that He was near, that we were not walking alone, and that His resurrection power still reaches into the middle of our fear, uncertainty, and need.

As we move toward Easter, this story invites us to trust the One who still has authority to forgive sins, heal what is broken, and lift us when we cannot lift ourselves. The same Savior who told a paralyzed man to get up and walk is the Savior who rose from the grave on Easter morning. Because He lives, we can place our burdens, our families, and our hopes in His hands with confidence!

DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL



Kurt Fehlis
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2015

John 5:1-9 ...⁵One man was there who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there and realized he had already been there a long time, he said to him, *“Do you want to get well?”*...

In John 5:1–9, Jesus meets a man who has been sick for thirty-eight years. Day after day, the man lies beside the pool, hoping for something to change but never experiencing real healing. When Jesus approaches him, He asks what seems like an obvious question: *“Do you want to get well?”* At first glance, it almost feels insensitive – of course, the man wants to be healed! He has been waiting nearly four decades! But Jesus isn’t asking about the man’s desire to walk; He’s asking about his willingness to trust. Many of us get stuck in the same patterns of pain, sin, fear, and disappointment for so long that they become familiar—even comfortable. Jesus’ question cuts deeper than our circumstances. It invites us to recognize that real change starts by admitting our need and letting Him take the lead in our lives.

As we look towards Easter, this miracle at the pool points forward to when Jesus will deal once and for all with the deepest sickness of the human heart. The cross shows us that our brokenness isn’t something Jesus avoids—it’s

something He steps directly into. Just as He approached the man no one else noticed, Jesus approaches us in our helplessness. His death absorbs the full weight of sin and shame. His burial is a reminder that He entered the darkest place humanity could go, and His resurrection is the ultimate declaration that healing is possible for all who believe! The same Jesus who told the man, *“Get up,”* is the Jesus who walked out of the grave—proving that nothing is too dead, too damaged, or too far gone for Him to restore.

So, Jesus still asks: *“Do you want to get well?”* Not “Have you earned it?” or “Can you fix yourself?” but “Will you trust Me enough to stand up and walk with Me?” Whether you’ve followed Jesus for years or you’re just beginning to explore who He is, Easter reminds you that healing starts with His invitation, not your ability. The risen Christ is still making the broken whole, still calling the stuck to move, and still offering new life to anyone willing to say yes. This Easter, may you hear His voice, rise in faith, and step into the life that only He can give.



IT'S TIME TO CHOOSE



Colton Berryhill
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2023

Mark 3:1-6 ...⁴Then he said to them, *“Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath or to do evil, to save life or to kill?”* But they were silent...

In 2016, Lego found itself in need of a significant change. Sales were slowing, digital entertainment was exploding, and the company faced a choice: cling to what had always worked or reimagine its future. Instead of giving up, they chose innovation, launching new digital tools and partnerships that have grown their brand to what it is today. It was a bold move that required humility, awareness, and a willingness to change. That moment reflects the scene in Mark 3. Jesus enters the synagogue and sees a man with a withered hand while the religious leaders watch with cold suspicion. They weren't looking for hope; they were looking for failure. Yet Jesus steps forward anyway and asks the question that forces everyone in the room to make a choice: **“Is it lawful...to save life or to kill?”** Will you cling to what is familiar, or choose what brings life?

That question bridges directly into our own hearts. The Pharisees were stubborn. They protected their system even when it harmed people. But Jesus chose restoration. He moved toward the hurting instead of hiding behind tradition. The healing of that man wasn't just about physical strength;

it was a glimpse into the heart of God, who refuses to let brokenness be the final word. Like Lego choosing reinvention over decline, Jesus shows us that life is found not in holding onto what has always been, but in stepping forward with courage, compassion, and purpose. Every miracle pointed ahead, revealing His everlasting commitment to bring life where death had settled.

And that road leads us directly to Easter. The resurrection is the ultimate moment of choosing life. Jesus didn't cling to comfort; He chose the cross so that we could choose freedom. Easter confronts us with the same question: Will we cling to what feels comfortable, or will we step toward the Savior who restores, heals, and resurrects? As we prepare our hearts for this season, may we choose the way of Jesus, the way that brings life, hope, and resurrection power into every withered place in our lives. It's time to choose.

CALMING THE STORMS WITHIN



Chris Carter
GABC Staff Member
Since 2024

Mark 4:35-41 ³⁷A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. ³⁸Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?" ³⁹He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. ⁴⁰He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?" ⁴¹They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Does your life feel chaotic? Do you often feel that you are being battered by the storms of your life? There have been times in my life when it felt like I was sitting on the Galveston jetties during a hurricane, being incessantly battered by wave after wave of sadness, fear, and just plain inner chaos.

The Bible is full of stories where one or more of God's people are caught in a storm of some sort. On a lake, in a lion's den, in a hot furnace, in a prison, in front of a giant. What do all these people have in common? They trusted God to calm the storms they were walking through, to deliver them safely to the other side of whatever they were facing.

When we accept God as our Lord and Savior, we acknowledge that He is sovereign, that He has control over the entire Earth, everything above it, and everything below it.

In Mark 4:39-40, we find Jesus peacefully sleeping on a pillow, in a boat, in the midst of a horrendous storm. He is accompanied by some of His disciples who are terribly frightened and are not only thinking that they are about to die, but they are questioning whether or not Jesus even cared about that fact. Jesus "...got up, rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, **"Silence! Be still!"** The wind ceased, and there was great calm. But listen to this, He then said to them, **"Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?"**

You see, this story is not necessarily about Jesus working another miracle; it is about **trusting**. The disciples did not have enough trust that the Lord would not let anything happen to them; they panicked.

Something else: did you notice that Christ was sleeping...soundly...on a cushion? How could He sleep in the middle of a horrendous storm? Could it be that He **TRUSTED** His father? **TRUSTED** that His father had a plan?

It is a fact of life that we have all faced difficult times, are in the midst of facing a difficult time, or will face future difficult times. Your storms look different from my storms. But, whatever the storm, we know that God is trustworthy. He keeps his promises. The Bible shows us time after time where He calmed the storms around those who put their faith in Him. I say to you, trust God with your storms; He is always faithful to calm our storms within, no matter the cause.

SITTING AT JESUS' FEET



Todd Haymans
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2022

*In **Luke 8:26-39** we find Jesus confronting a demon-possessed man who potentially embodies all of our most unimaginable fears and pain. A man whose life was completely out of control, without friends and without a future. When asked his name, the voices within replied, “Legion.” Jesus heals the man and then gives him a command, “Go back to your home, and tell all that God has done for you.”*

In Luke 8, Jesus steps onto the shores of the Gerasenes and immediately encounters a man whose life had been utterly shattered. He was naked, isolated, uncontrollable, and living among the tombs—the very picture of death while still breathing. No one could restrain him. No one could heal him. No one could reach him.

But Jesus could.

Before the man ever spoke, Jesus had already commanded the unclean spirit to leave him. The demons recognized what the people of the region did not: Jesus is the **Son of the Most High God**, the One with absolute authority over darkness. Even an army of demons—*Legion*—was no match for Him.

What follows is a dramatic and costly deliverance. A herd of pigs is lost, panic spreads, and the townspeople beg Jesus to leave. They fear His power more than they celebrate His mercy. Yet in the middle of the commotion sits one

peaceful, restored man—fully clothed and in his right mind—quietly resting at the feet of the One who saved him.

That image is the heart of the passage.

Jesus not only frees; He restores. He doesn't just remove torment; He gives back identity, dignity, and purpose. The man who once wandered among tombs is now sent back to the very people who had exiled him, carrying a message they desperately needed to hear: *"Tell all that God has done for you."*

We, too, have places in our lives that feel like tombs—habits, fears, wounds, and sins that have chained us for far too long. But the presence of Jesus brings hope into even the darkest corners. Where sin runs deep, Grace runs deeper. Nothing is too far gone for His restoring power.

And when He works in us, His desire is not only that we sit at His feet in gratitude, but that we rise and share what He has done. Your story of grace, chains broken, and peace restored, may be the very thing that leads people to Jesus.

Today, rest in Him and then go tell the world of what He's done.

A SINGLE SOLITARY TOUCH



Jeanne Thompson
GABC Member
Since 1974

*In **Mark 5:25-34** & **Luke 8:42-49**, we find Jesus performing two of His many miracles. Healing a woman who suffered from bleeding for 12 years and raising a man's 12-year-old daughter who had died.*

The poem, “The Touch of the Master” by Myra Brooks Welch, is about a battered old violin that sits unwanted at an auction. But when a master violinist picks it up, dusts it off, and begins to play, instantly the value of the violin increases. The only thing that changed was who had touched the instrument. The value of the violin was not in the wood, but in the touch of the master’s hand.

Jarius, a synagogue leader, pleaded with Jesus to lay his hand on his only child, a 12-year-old daughter, who was dying. Jesus, along with Peter, James, and John, followed Jarius to the family home. Professional mourners were already weeping and wailing, believing the girl was already dead. Jesus told the parents, “**Do not be afraid, only believe.**” He laid “His hand on their child” and said, “**Talitha koum**” meaning “Little girl get up.” Her life was immediately restored.

In a large crowd of people waiting for Jesus, there was a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years. She was an outcast, desperate and alone. She did have faith, however, that if she could just touch the hem of Jesus’ robe, she

would be healed. She boldly reached out to him, touched his garment, and in an instant, her bleeding stopped. Her shame was gone, her humiliation left her, and He lovingly called her “daughter” and told her that her faith had healed her.

Easter reminds us that, like the old scarred violin, we are never too broken for the Master’s touch. May we never forget the same Master’s touch still restores, renews, and brings hope today. As the poem continues:

*But the Master comes
and the foolish crowd can never quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that is wrought
by the touch of the Master’s hand.*



THERE IS ENOUGH FOR EVERYONE



Dan Rucker
GABC Member
Since 2024

*In **Mark 6:30-43**, Jesus feeds the 5,000 followers who have settled in for an evening of being taught by the teacher.*

In the passage where Jesus fed 5,000 men, Jesus and His disciples found themselves in the wilderness with a very large number of people, but only two fish and five loaves of bread to feed them. The day had been long, filled with Jesus' teaching, and it seemed hopeless to fill the needs of so many who had come to see Jesus.

When Jesus asked His disciples what to do regarding the need for food, their answers only revealed the futile situation they were in. Their only solution was, therefore, to send the crowd away hungry with their needs unmet. But Jesus performed an unexpected miracle by taking the little food that was available, miraculously multiplying it, and leaving everyone so well fed that there was abundant food left over.

This passage is a reflection of what Jesus has done for all of us on the cross. He has seen our spiritual hunger that desires fellowship with God, but that cannot be obtained in any possible human way. Man's ability falls hopelessly short of God's requirement, but Jesus miraculously went forward to the cross and accomplished what could never be

accomplished by anyone else. His death gives us life; His resurrection gives us our only eternal hope. All the spiritual hunger in the world is more than met through Jesus, and there is no other name given under heaven.

Is it no wonder that Jesus is called the bread of life? In John 6:35, Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; the one who comes to Me will not be hungry, and the one who believes in Me will never be thirsty.”

TO BE FORGIVEN MUCH (OR) DEFERRED ADJUDICATION



Steve & Deena
Brand
GABC Members
Since 2014

In Luke 7:36-50 Jesus is dining at the home of one of the Pharisees, when a sinful woman of great faith arrives to wash the feet of her beloved Jesus, with her tears and expensive perfume.

Speeding tickets!!!!!!! I have received more speeding tickets than you can imagine. I am constantly reminded to “SLOW DOWN....you’re gonna get a ticket!!!! The speed limit is 65, not 85.” The police and highway patrol will almost always write me a ticket. I have taken Defensive Driving so many times, I can teach the class. I know the term *Deferred Adjudication* well. In this scripture, you will see how Jesus quickly addressed the situation and *adjudicated* the outcome.

Why is it so easy to judge others? Sometimes, we don’t measure up to others. Look at this woman and the facts surrounding her. She took it upon herself to go to Jesus, and her lifestyle didn’t reflect the expectations of the Pharisees. What drew her to want to be near Jesus? And then, after she crashed the party, she did the most unusual, out-of-the-ordinary act of kindness. Why would she give the most precious, most valued treasure of her belongings to Jesus? Not only did she give it to Jesus, she also poured it all over his feet. She cleaned his dirty, dusty feet while

crying in front of everyone at the party. How humiliating and embarrassing! In the ensuing conversation, we see how people are so quick to judge this woman, which is followed by her demonstration of humility. Jesus said your MANY sins have been forgiven, and just like God the Father, He gave His all, and she gave her best. Jesus on the cross was God's best; His most treasured was offered for my dirty and dusty life.

Why? Because she loved MUCH! Just like God, He loves us so much! So much that He broke His only bottle of alabaster perfume for me in His son Jesus on the cross. Maybe it's time to slow down. What can I give Him? What can I offer that I have for His forgiveness? Is there something I need to ask for forgiveness? Is there someone I need to forgive? "Father, grant me wisdom to forgive."

THERE ARE NO COINCIDENCES. ONLY DIVINE APPOINTMENTS



Ken Brumley
GABC Member / Staff
Since 1985

John 11:17-38 *This passage of scripture focuses on Jesus' raising of Lazarus from the grave. It would be a foreshadowing of His own death and resurrection.*

Someone once said, "There are no coincidences. Only Divine appointments." When we pause for a moment and look at the miracle of Jesus raising Lazarus from the grave, it's clear to see there are far greater spiritual implications than meet the ordinary eye. I believe Jesus bringing Lazarus back from the dead was a clear "divine appointment" that exposed the pure providence of God. This last great miracle of Jesus' public ministry had been orchestrated from the beginning of time.

The prophets in the Old Testament all spoke of a Savior to come and that he would be falsely accused, tortured, and then suffer the most horrible death mankind had known. Retired GABC Executive Pastor, Ken Warren, once said, "No one killed Jesus. He willingly gave himself up to die for all our sins." This divine appointment that Jesus had with Lazarus was a foreshadowing of what would happen in His own death and resurrection.

Do you think it was just a coincidence that Jesus was just on the opposite side of the river when Lazarus died? Do you think it was just a coincidence that Jesus waited 3 plus days

before He went to his tomb? Do you think it was just a coincidence that one of the sisters of Lazarus was also the one who anointed Jesus' head? Jesus wanted to make sure that His disciples knew that Lazarus had really died instead of just being asleep.

In the providence or plan of God, the real purpose of Lazarus' death was that God would be glorified and that Jesus would be glorified through it. Jesus is acting out what was to come in His own death and resurrection so that His disciples, as well as you and I, would truly believe that He is the Savior of the world.

Jesus was intentional in everything He did and with everyone He met. Ephesians 2:10

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”
There are no coincidences for us as believers, only divine appointments.

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY



Stephen Ballard
GABC Member
Since 2008

Matt 21:9 *⁹Then the crowds who went ahead of him and those who followed shouted:*

*“Hosanna to the Son of David!
Blessed is he who comes in the name
of the Lord!
Hosanna in the highest heaven!”*

The prophet Zechariah told of the time when Israel’s king would enter Jerusalem. He writes in Zechariah 9:9, *“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

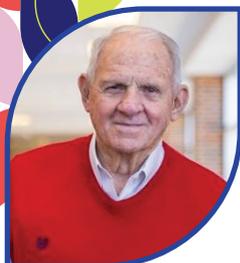
Imagine Jesus riding into Tyler. What would your response be? In Matthew 21:9, we read of the response of many of the people in Jerusalem on the day that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah. We read, *“The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!”*”

The word Hosanna has several meanings. One meaning is a plea for help. Another meaning is an expression of gratitude for what has or is about to happen. The people, expecting relief from the Romans, were expressing both.

They were asking for salvation from the Roman oppression and, at the same time, thanking Jesus for what they thought He was about to do.

Do you need Jesus to make a triumphal entry into your life this Easter season? Do you need His help in some way? Are you struggling with relationships, health, or some other physical issue? Then let Jesus enter into those struggles. Perhaps you need Jesus to make an entry into your soul this Easter through salvation. Then stop right now and ask Him! Whatever your need, will you cry out “Hosanna” to Jesus and then watch Him work in your life? Then, after He has done remarkable things, cry out “Hosanna” again to express your gratitude for what He has done.

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE



Bob Cox
GABC Member
Since 2000

Matthew 21:13 ¹³He said to them, “It is written, my house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a den of thieves!”

During the last week of Jesus’ life, before His crucifixion, Jesus celebrated Passover. After His triumphal entry, He went to the temple and made an alarming discovery and a much more alarming display of cleansing the temple of God.

This is the second cleansing of the temple at Jesus’ hand. (John 2:14-16) This temple, the house of prayer, was found to be occupied by dishonest merchants, customers buying and selling religious goods and sacrificial animals, and exchanging money. These sinful activities aroused Jesus’ indignation at what the present leaders had allowed, even encouraged to happen in God’s house. The temple had totally become a den of thieves.

The cleansing of this “brick and mortar” temple should alert us to God’s intended purpose of the temple and our role in continuing to keep God’s temple in order and to implement its intended purpose. Our role today has an even greater charge from God. “Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor 3:16-17/6:19-20)

Thus, a Christian's body belongs to the Lord, is a member of Christ, and is the Holy Spirit's temple. Every sin committed by the believer occurs in the sanctuary, the Holy of Holies, where God dwells. Therefore, the temple should not house sinful thoughts, evil intentions, or harbor sinful desires. Every day should include a cleansing, a thorough temple cleaning, which would include seeking God's forgiveness for things found in His temple that do not belong there. This would include hidden desires, thoughts, and/or actions that have slipped in to hide there.

Therefore, since we committed to a belief in God and surrendered to His plan for our lives, we are the temple of God. What does God want in His house? He has said it is to be called a House of Prayer (Matt. 21:13). These prayers should reflect true evidence of our dependence on God and our faith in His Word. These prayers should focus on prayers of supplication, intercession, and giving of thanks for all men....(1 Tim 2:1); they should reflect praise for God (Psalm 9:1-2); and reflect power from the Holy Spirit. (Acts 1:8)

Great is our responsibility! Keep His temple clean, operational, and functional to accomplish His will in our lives. Keep it clean!

REMEMBER



Fisher Francis
GABC Member / Intern
Since 2025

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 ²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, *“This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, *“This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”* ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

Much has been said through the years about the different qualities existing in a relationship with Christ. He is a friend and a companion. He is a healer, a provider, and a warrior who goes before us. But in these passages, Paul is explaining that Jesus desires something much deeper than we might know.

In writing to the young church in Corinth, the Apostle Paul wrote about the importance and significance of the last meal Jesus had with His disciples. Before Paul wrote his letter to Corinth, Matthew and John also wrote about the impactful words spoken during their meal together. At this moment, Jesus is broadening their understanding of who He is and must continue to be in their personal lives in the days to come. In these verses, Jesus is not talking about the importance of observing a time of communion in our church services; He is talking about a complete mental and spiritual paradigm shift. He is letting His disciples know that choosing to follow would mean a death to an old way of thinking, understanding, and relating to God and an introduction to a life they could never conceive.

Paul wants us to know Jesus was a New Word from God, a New Covenant, a New Relationship never experienced before between God and His creation since the first Adam. Jesus would be the embodiment of truth and love. Jesus was saying that to fully experience this New Covenant would be a journey of total immersion. This night, Jesus was introducing us to a deeper understanding of the meaning of baptism and a deeper understanding of the power of His resurrection to come.

We, as Christians, must learn to recognize the significance of a daily dying to ourselves and accepting the beauty of a life of freedom, forgiveness, and wholeness through His resurrection. The cross and humiliating death that was meant to make people forget who Jesus is only sparked a revival across nations. Because when people remember the life that Jesus lived, the relationship He desires, and the death that He conquered, it ignites an improbable faith that leads to an unstoppable revival.

On the last night of his earthly life, Jesus closes His time with His disciples with a simple “how.” How can they experience this New Life, this New Covenant, this New Relationship? He simply said, “Remember.” Every day, every opportunity, every situation, in every moment of the unknown and unwanted, **Remember**.

THE WILLINGNESS TO PRAY AND DO



Gavin Vaughan
GABC Member
Since 2022

In Matthew 26:36-44 we find Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane where He is “deeply grieved to the point of death.” Knowing His time is near He prays to His father three times saying “your will be done.”

Today's reading brings us to the climax of the garden experience, even more so than the cross itself. What happens at the cross is decided here.

In verse 36, we hear Jesus say, “*Sit here while I go and pray.*” Jesus does not tell His disciples to pray with Him, just to watch and be there. Jesus then takes His inner three, Peter, James, and John, who had been with Him at the transfiguration, and moves on a little further away— *watch with me*. Jesus then went a little farther, and verse 39 tells us that Jesus “*fell on His face.*” Jesus did not stand or kneel in prayer but fell on His face. This is not just another prayer, but the innermost yearnings of a person in turmoil. Jesus prayed in verse 39 “*Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass.*” Mark adds that “father” is the Aramaic word, *abba*, the word a child calls his father, Daddy. This is a request from his heart to his daddy.

The human side of Jesus did not want to endure the cross. If there was another way to pay for the sins of the world, Jesus would have easily done it. The one who had never known what sin was would become the sin of the

world from the first Adam until now. But Jesus prays the costliest prayer of His human life. It would be a prayer that reveals His God given purpose. “Not my will, but yours be done.”

After this first time of prayer, Jesus returned to His three disciples to find them asleep. He encouraged them to pray this time and then returned to the shadows to pray again. Verse 42 states, he prayed, “*My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.*” Though this prayer may look like the first prayer, there is a difference. In the second prayer, Jesus said, “*if it is not possible.*”

At that moment, Jesus conveyed to God what His desire is; now He realizes that there is no other way, His death is required. This is a first-class conditional sentence in Greek. A condition that is already determined or assumed to be true. So, since it can't pass or be any other way, the cup must be drunk. Here then, is the real decision by Jesus: *Thy will be done*. If that is what is needed, then Jesus says ok, I'm good with that. He has made His decision about the cross. He has accepted God's will and is now ready for the cross.

BETRAYAL AND DECEIT



Cathryn Johnson
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2011

Matthew 26:47-56 is not only the account of Judas's betrayal of Jesus, but it also lets us know, one more time, that Jesus' crucifixion was predestined. That this was God's plan all along. ⁵⁶ "...But all this has happened so that the writings of the prophets would be fulfilled."

Matthew 26:47–56 shows that betrayal begins in the heart before it becomes an action. Judas's kiss in the garden revealed a values issue—something mattered more to him than loyalty to Jesus. While money marked the moment, the deeper struggle was allegiance. Judas chose his own expectations and sense of control over trust and obedience.

Betrayal grows when we live divided lives. Judas walked closely with Jesus, heard His teaching, and saw His power, yet his heart remained conflicted. Jesus spoke of sacrifice, surrender, and obedience to the Father. For some, those words led to faith; for others, discomfort. Staying near to Jesus outwardly while resisting Him inwardly is the root of betrayal.

Deceit comes from unresolved motivation. Judas' actions were not about money alone. Disappointment, pride, fear, and the desire for significance likely played a role. Like the other disciples, he struggled with identity. Following Jesus meant a complete change of life, and the disciples often seemed unsure of who they were becoming. Judas chose appearance over honesty.

John 6 reminds us that Jesus knew the hearts of His followers. Judas was chosen and fully known, yet free to walk in truth or deceit. When Jesus' teaching became difficult, many left. Judas stayed physically present but spiritually distant. And when Jesus was arrested, all the disciples failed—some fled, one betrayed.

This moves us from judging Judas to recognizing ourselves. How often do we say we follow Jesus yet deny Him through compromise, silence, or disobedience? How many times have we denied the Lord or failed to obey? And yet Jesus never leaves. He continues to love, to call, and to welcome us. Life and faith can get messy. We struggle, stumble, and sometimes lose our way. But Jesus understands. His love meets us right where we are and grows deeper as we grow closer to Him. He pursues us even when our hearts feel scattered. This Easter, let your heart pause in awe. Our God is holy—holy, holy, holy—and yet He came near to us. The One who faced betrayal and deceit with perfect grace did it so we could be forgiven, restored, and forever His.

The resurrection gives us hope. Because Jesus lives, we are free to turn from deceit and choose lives of truth that reflect the risen Christ.

A CONVICTION WITHOUT A TRIAL



Jason Humphrey
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2004

Matthew 26:63–66 ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. The high priest said to him, “I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” ⁶⁴“**You have said it,**” Jesus told him. **“But I tell you, in the future you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”** ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, “He has blasphemed! Why do we still need witnesses? See, now you’ve heard the blasphemy. ⁶⁶What is your decision? They answered, “He deserves death!”

It was the middle of the night when the most unjust trial in human history took place. There were no witnesses who agreed, no valid charges, and no opportunity for defense—yet the verdict was already decided. Jesus was declared guilty before He ever spoke a word. The religious leaders weren’t seeking truth; they were seeking a way to silence it.

I remember meeting once with a family who was upset over a ministry decision our team had made. They felt wronged and frustrated, and though I understood their perspective, I also knew there were details I couldn’t share for the sake of confidentiality. I listened, tried to show grace, and left the meeting heavy-hearted. I knew the decision was right, but it still hurt to be misunderstood. In that moment, the Lord reminded me of this scene in Matthew 26. Jesus, too, was misunderstood and misrepresented, yet He chose silence. His peace didn’t come from being proven right—it came from trusting His Father’s will.

What's powerful about this passage is not just that Jesus was wrongly accused, but that He willingly stayed silent. He could have defended Himself with divine authority, but instead He chose to surrender. Why? Because He wasn't just standing trial before Caiaphas—He was standing in our place before a holy God. A conviction without a trial became the means of our salvation.

There will be moments in life when we feel unfairly treated or falsely accused. In those times, we can look to Jesus' example. His quiet endurance turned injustice into redemption. Because He was condemned, we are forgiven. Because He bore our guilt, we now stand free. The cross reminds us that God's justice and mercy met in Jesus—and the resurrection declares that His final verdict over us is innocent.



A CHANGE OF HEART



Debbie Stuart
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2018

Mark 15:15 ¹⁵*Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them; and after having Jesus flogged, he handed him over to be crucified.*

The people changed their minds about Jesus; they had a change of heart. The same people who were shouting, “Hosanna!” on Palm Sunday were now shouting, “Crucify him!” just five days later. It’s hard to understand why people “turned on Jesus”. Perhaps some saw Him as a threat. Some did not like the message that Jesus was sharing. Some misunderstood His mission. I’ve been guilty of “misunderstanding the ways of Jesus.”

“Wanting to satisfy the crowd”...New Living Translation reads: “Anxious to please the crowd.” Another thing that gets us off track with Jesus is “what others think”. We often face moments when doing the right thing will cost us something – approval, reputation, status. Let’s be courageous and choose what’s right. Let’s choose Jesus! Let’s follow Him and His mission with full conviction and resilient faith.

It's important to note: Not all those who previously supported Jesus turned against Him. Not everyone in the crowd called for Jesus' crucifixion, there were individuals who loved Him and stood by Him. I want to be one of those people in my day and age.

I'm Debbie Stuart and I choose Jesus!

JESUS THE TRUE KING



Brett Cavett
GABC Member
Since 2003

Mark 15:6-22 *In these verses, Mark takes us behind the scenes to see our depravity. We are the guards who tortured and humiliated Jesus. The love of Jesus moved him through the pain to save us.*

Jesus has just been condemned to death by Pilate and flogged. Now He is turned over to the soldiers who took Him to their quarters in Pilate's palace. The soldiers gather around Jesus, knowing the words of Pilate, who referred to Him as "king of the Jews." They mock Him by dressing Him in a purple robe, the color of royalty. They made a crown of thorns for His head as a substitute for a real crown. They pretend to worship Him as they beat the crown further on his head with a staff and spit on Him. They mocked Him with their words of fake worship, challenging His kingship. Eventually, they stop and lead him away to be executed by crucifixion.

In this passage, there is Jesus and the soldiers. Obviously, what these soldiers did was cruel. We often forget this part of the crucifixion story, but it was part of the process Jesus endured for the sake of our sins. Jesus knew this would happen as He prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. He willingly allowed this to happen. What obedience! What love! What a Savior! However, what about the soldiers? They were just doing their job. They saw nothing special in

Jesus and did not care about Him, as is often the case in our world. Jesus is just some religious figure or a word to use with profanity. People are spiritually blind, like the soldiers.

Father, thank you for showing your love for us by sending Jesus, your Son, to suffer and die a cruel death on the cross. Jesus, thank you for willingly submitting your life for me, knowing fully what you would experience. May I always remember your great love and the forgiveness of sins you have given me through your crucifixion, and may I obey you as you obeyed the Father. Use me to share the life-transforming truth of Jesus to a world that is spiritually blind. May you open the eyes of the “soldiers” around us, so they can see that you are truly the King.

A SON'S WORDS TO HIS FATHER



Herb Bryant
GABC Member
Since 2003

Luke 23:34 Jesus said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”* And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

In this passage, Jesus is being nailed to a cross to hang between two thieves. He is experiencing the most shameful, excruciatingly painful death a person could receive. As He looks in the eyes of the four soldiers nailing His hands and feet to the cross, He knows they are unaware of who they are crucifying. It’s a job they have been ordered to do and, likely, have become desensitized to the process.

On this day, these men don’t hear curses or screams from Jesus. They hear a Son’s Words to His Father. He says, *“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”* A prayer on their behalf that comes from the heart of a Son reflecting the heart of God, His Father.

How can He do that? Because it is God’s love reflected through the heart of His Son. The essence of His mission on earth is to offer grace and mercy to all sinners. Jesus surrendered His life for our redemption by taking the sins of mankind, past, present, and future upon Himself. He demonstrates that forgiveness is a key element in the way we are to live our lives in a broken world. He

teaches us to forgive those who hurt us because we have been forgiven by the Lord (Lk. 6:27; Matt. 6:14; Mk. 11:25; Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13).

Jesus said that to be His disciple, we are to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. We are a new creation, indwelt by His Holy Spirit. This means we are to be conformed to His image and have the like mind of Christ. Are we living a life reflecting the love of God by loving Him with all of our being and loving one another? In Jesus' model prayer, the forgiveness we receive is dependent upon the forgiveness we give to those who offend us. Forgiveness liberates us from bitterness and opens our hearts to healing.

Spend time in prayer, asking God to help you embody the forgiveness that Jesus demonstrated. Allow His grace to fill you, empowering you to extend that same grace to others.

A CONVERSATION ABOUT ETERNITY



Kevin Burdette
GABC Member / Staff
Since 1991

Luke 23:43 And he said to him, *“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.”*

In this scene of the crucifixion story, we meet two people, both criminals, who are being crucified on either side of Jesus. While hanging on his cross, one of these men joined with the crowd that was gathered and hurled insults at Jesus. He ridiculed the idea that Jesus was Messiah but still couldn't save himself.

The other criminal, who had just heard Jesus ask God to forgive those who crucified Him, rebuked the first man by reminding him who they were - criminals. He said, “Do you not fear God? Jesus has done nothing wrong. We are receiving the justice we deserve.” Then, this man does something amazing. He turned to Jesus and said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

In this story we see how two men view their circumstances and Jesus very differently. First, they had completely different understandings of who Jesus is. While one hurled insults and ridiculed Jesus, the other came to realize what Jesus gives – forgiveness and hope.

Secondly, the two men had different concepts about their true need. The first wanted to be delivered from his current

earthly circumstance of a death sentence. “Save yourself and us,” he demanded from Jesus. He was begging Jesus to save his physical life. But the second man realized there was something much greater happening here. He realized his greatest need was beyond his present circumstance. He realized eternity was on the line. That is when he asked Jesus “remember me when you come into your kingdom.”

Finally, these two thieves came to differing conclusions about their own guilt. One didn't recognize his own sin and blamed Jesus because he had not been rescued. The other thief came to understand his punishment was just because of his own actions. In the final moments of his life, he realized he was a sinner without forgiveness and would forever be separated from God. What Jesus did next was amazing.

Without hesitation, Jesus accepted this man into His kingdom. Jesus was the only hope he had. Jesus was the only hope he needed. Jesus still offers today, without hesitation, his grace and mercy to anyone who asks. And because this man, while hanging on the cross, accepted Jesus' forgiveness, he is with Jesus in paradise today.

Isn't it amazing that two people can be so close to Jesus and can come to completely different decisions about Him? These two men heard the same words from Jesus but only one chose to believe who Jesus was and ask to be accepted by Him. We all must answer the same questions about Jesus: Who do you say Jesus is? What is our deepest need in this life? Have you accepted Jesus' love and forgiveness? What does being with Jesus in paradise (heaven) mean?

JESUS SPEAKS TO MARY AND JOHN



Nancy Horton
GABC Member
Since 2005

John 19:26-27:²⁶When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “**Woman, here is your son,**”²⁷and to the disciple, “**Here is your mother.**” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

God spoke to me in my darkest moments. I needed Him more than I realized. I struggled in grief when God took my husband to heaven a couple of years after He had taken my dad. One year and three days later, my mom died. I didn't understand. But God spoke to me in these darkest moments. Years before, He had given us a son during the same time of the year. Our only son turned 27 on the day we buried his father and 28 a year later on the day of my mom's death. Even in these dark times of confusion, I recognized the blessing of God's timing. Through our grief, we were able to celebrate the circle of life so clearly evidenced by God. God knew the timing of our son's birth would bring joy and spiritual encouragement in good times and times of grief.

I cannot imagine the agony Mary felt at the cross. She watched her son being crucified in the most humiliating and gruesome way. She couldn't comfort Him. Mary must have thought she would be alone but Jesus spoke to her and told her that John would be her son. Although she had other sons, none the Scripture describes as believers at this point in time. Mary had known from before His birth that this son

would be different. She had heard Simeon's words that Jesus had been sent as a sign from God, many would oppose him, and a sword would pierce her heart. (Luke 2:34-35) Prophecy was being fulfilled. Mary didn't fully understand, but she trusted Jesus' words and obeyed.

John, referred to as the disciple Jesus loved, watched Jesus being brutalized. He couldn't intervene. Prophecy was being fulfilled. Jesus told John that Mary would be his mother. He took Mary home with him and cared for her. He didn't fully understand but he trusted Jesus' words and obeyed.

Most importantly, Jesus watched His mother and beloved disciple witness His suffering. In His human pain and misery, His thoughts and words provided care and guidance for His mother and His friend.

God speaks to us even in our darkest moments. In obedience, we can listen to Him and see the glory of His faithfulness.

CRYING OUT TO THE FATHER



Jim Little
GABC Member
Since 2019

Matthew 27:46, About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “**Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?**” that is, “**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**”

Mark 15:34, And at three Jesus cried out with a loud voice, “**Eloi, Eloi, lemá sabachtháni?**” which is translated, “**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**”

From all eternity, God lived in perfect harmony within Himself. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit – a “Tri-unity.” A mystery to us humans, the Trinity is the perfect picture of eternal harmony. At least it was, until this moment. This had never happened before and can never happen again. It is the moment when the harmony within God was broken. Temporarily, yes, but broken, nonetheless. God the Father abandoned God the Son. This was the defining moment in the history of the universe.

Eternal harmony turned to dissonance as Jesus cried out to the Father. He has been on the cross for six grueling hours. For the last three hours, in impenetrable darkness. Suddenly, from out of the blackness, the crowd hears, “**Elí, Elí, lemá sabachtháni?**” Jesus speaks in Aramaic, quoting Psalm 22:1. “**My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?**”

In the darkness, the sinless Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world. He became the sin-bearer, the Suffering Servant, whom the Old Testament prophesied.

“All of us like sheep have gone astray,
Each of us has turned to his own way;
But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all
to fall on Him.” Isaiah 53:6 (NASB)

Sin separates us from the infinitely, eternally, and unchangeably holy God (Isaiah 59:2). When our sin was laid upon Jesus, the Father turned away, temporarily abandoning Him in His sin, which was our sin. Jesus was not abandoned **by** the Father; the triune nature of God is unalterable. But the Father’s Christ was abandoned **from** His protection and **to** His wrath. **The Father abandoned the Son to the consequences of our sin.** “The wages of sin is death,” and a few breaths later, Jesus died. But he died not as an abandoned victim, but as an adored victor.

To those whose faith is in the Suffering Servant, God reminds, “I will never leave you or abandon you.” Hebrews 13:6 (CSB)

Jesus cried out to the Father because He was abandoned in our sin. We can cry out to the Father because we are accepted in Christ’s righteousness.

I AM THIRSTY



Linda Fehlis
GABC Member
Since 2020

John 19:28 After this, when Jesus knew that everything was now finished that the Scripture might be fulfilled, he said, *“I’m thirsty.”*²⁹ A jar full of sour wine was sitting there; so they fixed a sponge full of sour wine on a hyssop branch and held it up to his mouth.

Matthew 27:34 Mark 15:23

Psalm 69:21

Have you ever felt such intense thirst that it was hard to even talk, and your only desire was for a sip of water?

Looking back over my 75 years, one memory of thirst stands out vividly. My family and our closest friends—four adults and two teenagers—were mountain biking along Colorado’s Monarch Pass Trail, far from any town. The trail challenged all of us, and after falling three times, I broke my leg on the last tumble. We waited for hours for help to arrive, and during that time, our water supply ran dry. We sent the teenagers ahead, and they discovered a mountain spring. That fresh, cold spring water never tasted better!

The excruciating pain of Jesus’ crucifixion was more than any human body could endure. After hanging on the cross for several hours, Jesus’ body began to shut down. Jesus declined the wine mixed with gall that would have lessened His pain. The agony Jesus endured came from a heart of love that was greater than His pain. Just before speaking His final words, He declared, “I am thirsty.” This fulfilled the prophecy from Psalm 22:15.

At that moment of thirst, Jesus embodies both His humanity and His identity as the Son of God – fully Man and fully God – as He dies for our sins. His thirst could have been for water or reconnection with His Father.

What do you thirst for today? We can drink water for our human body, but what is our soul thirsty for? We can never forget that only Jesus IS the water that can quench our thirst.

WHEN YOUR WORK IS DONE



Ken Warren
GABC Member
Since 2001

John 19:30 When he had received the drink, Jesus said, *“It is finished.”* With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.”

If the demonstrations that it inspires are any indication, there are few things in sports as exciting as successfully achieving a hard-fought victory. In basketball, it may be a celebratory “slam dunk.” In football, it is a ball “spiked” in the end zone. In auto racing, it is the cloud of tire smoke that engulfs the winning driver as the car spins in celebration on the way to the winner’s circle. However, as exciting as these celebrations may be, not one of them remotely compares to the greatest recorded celebration in history – and that celebration involves only a single word.

John the Disciple records it for us in verse 19:30 of his Gospel account. After suffering the abuse, agony, torture, and disgrace of a Crucifixion, when John explains that it was time for Jesus to willingly surrender His life, Jesus celebrated with a single word. Now, in our English scripture, it appears as three words; but as John originally recorded it in Greek, it is only one – *“tetelestai”*—“It is Finished!”

There may be no more powerful expression of victory in any language. With that single word, Jesus summarized not only His teaching, His suffering, and His very purpose; He celebrated the fulfillment of everything about Himself that

had been promised since the beginning of time. And, in doing so, He celebrated the completion of all that was required for OUR Forgiveness – for OUR Salvation – for OUR Victory.

Because of the Victory that Jesus declared with that one word, we can live a life of fellowship and purpose with Him, simply by trusting in all that He accomplished for us. I fully suspect that as Jesus “bowed His head and gave up His spirit,” the next words He heard may well have been, “well done, good and faithful servant.” And, I have a sneaking suspicion that when our work on earth is finally done, we might anticipate hearing the same – not because of anything we have accomplished on our own, but exclusively because of what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

“It Is Finished!”

INTO YOUR HANDS



Paul Christman
GABC Member
Since 1998

Luke 23:44-49 ... ⁴⁶And Jesus called out with a loud voice, “**Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit.**” Saying this, he breathed his last....

Psalm 31:5 Into your hand I entrust my spirit; you have redeemed me, Lord, God of truth.

Luke, the gentile physician and companion of the Apostle Paul, records Jesus' last words on the cross before his death.

“Then Jesus, calling out with a loud voice, said, ‘**Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!**’ And having said this, he breathed his last.” — *Luke 23:46 (ESV)*

This final statement by Jesus reveals the restoration of the Father-Son Relationship. Jesus had cried out earlier, “**My God My God.**” A cry of abandonment. But now that “**It is finished**” and the redemption work of the cross had been confirmed by “the curtain of the temple was torn in two,” Jesus joins again with the Father and Spirit.

Jesus' words quote Psalm 31:5 and confirm that His death is not a circumstance but an intentional fulfillment of scripture. Luke says that He cried out with a “loud voice.” This is not the soft whisper of defeat but the declaration of victory. John McArthur says, “The loud voice indicates that despite being on a cross, it shows He was not weak but fully in control, even in death.”

Jesus' death is a final act of Faith. Jesus' life was not taken from Him; he said, "I commit my spirit." He gave His life. His sacrificial death was an act of obedience. It demonstrated He was totally human and that He willingly entrusted His spirit to the Father.

This final act of faith becomes a model for every believer. Jesus demonstrates for each of us how to approach our own death – with confidence in Father God's care and sovereignty.

Luke records the response from three different perspectives: (1) The Centurion, confession and insight, faith born of Spiritual revelation; (2) The Crowd went home beating their chest. A Jewish expression of guilt and maybe repentance, but not yet faith to believe. (3) And the followers from Galilee were distant but watching – faithfully waiting without clarity but with hope. All waiting on the final Victory, the Resurrection.

A DISTANT GATHERING



Linda Lesniewski
GABC Member
Since 1983

Matthew 27:55-56 ⁵⁵Many women who had followed Jesus from Galilee and looked after him were there, watching from a distance. ⁵⁶Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons.

Four words in Matthew's Gospel describe an almost incomprehensible scene: "many women were there." Four additional words offer a telling detail: "watching from a distance."

I marvel as I reflect upon those women, apparently standing with no display of emotion, as required by Roman law. Who were they? What drew them there? What held them there?

Matthew's and Luke's Gospels identify some of them: Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of Zebedee's sons, identified as Salome elsewhere in Scripture. As the others watched and remembered, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was brutally experiencing the fulfillment of Simeon's prophecy that a sword would pierce her heart (Luke 2:35). Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna were healed from evil spirits or diseases (Luke 8:2-3). Another Mary and her sons, followers of Jesus, witnessed His miracles and teachings. Salome also experienced Jesus' healings and teachings while traveling with her two sons, disciples of Jesus (Matthew 27:55-56).

Scripture does not reveal any details of the other women, the unnamed ones who stood in the distance. I am confident they, too, brought their stories with them, stories ingrained within their heart and soul. Each had experienced something profound, something no woman had experienced since sin entered the world—emotional intimacy with God in the flesh. This intimacy embraced healing, acceptance, unconditional love, affirmation, and a life enriched with purpose and meaning. Jesus, their teacher, Rabbi, and Savior, had transformed their lives, and their physical presence proclaimed their devotion, their testimony, and their transformed hearts.

Often, when reflecting upon the crucifixion scene, I imagine myself standing shoulder-to-shoulder among that distant gathering of women. Through silent grief and wordless prayers, we proclaim together the wonder of Christ's transformative love.

A BURIAL FIT FOR A KING



Vickie Leonard
GABC Member
Since 2009

John 19:36-42 ³⁶For these things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: Not one of his bones will be broken. ...

Many people are intrigued by the pageantry of a royal wedding or funeral. We see the gilded coaches, jeweled scepters, and magnificent cathedrals to honor earthly kings and queens. In contrast, the burial of the King of kings was less spectacular. After Jesus was crucified, Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy, righteous Jewish leader, went to Pilate at great personal risk to ask for the body of Jesus. A proper burial for Jesus was a bold step for Joseph and Nicodemus as members of the Sanhedrin and required great courage. In humility, the secret disciples wished to honor Jesus in death where they had not boldly acknowledged Him in life. From secrecy to courage, the secret followers of Jesus leave the shadows to boldly follow their faith. While the disciples hid in fear, the two believers prepared His body for burial. This commitment to bury the body of their Lord confirms that Jesus truly died. Death was certain, and the sacrifice for sin was complete.

Bringing the body to the new tomb, Joseph's tomb, we see the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy in Isaiah. "He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth". Isaiah 53:9. Nicodemus' purchase of

substantial quantities of costly spices and linen for wrapping the body of Jesus was intended as a tribute befitting a king. As Jesus was born and wrapped in swaddling clothes, now His crucified body was wrapped again in linen strips. The Word became flesh, and the Son of God died for us. The burial was complete, and the tomb sealed, but praise God, we can trust that God is at work even when we don't understand what He is doing.

The burial of Jesus prepares us for the empty tomb to come, the resurrection of our Lord. Revelation 1:18 tells us, **"I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever!"** The great exchange, my sin for His righteousness. Our sinful nature has been crucified with Christ and buried with Him. May we follow Him in courage and boldness, coming from the shadows to publicly declare our faith in Christ Jesus.

HE IS NOT HERE



Cheryl Palmer
GABC Member
Since 2002

John 20:1-18 *The death of Jesus was a traumatic event for everyone who had heard His words of life and experienced healing. Mary Magdalene was no exception to the rule. Jesus had cast seven demons out of her when they met. Her response to that miracle-freeing event was to follow and serve. Here we find a former outcast being the first to the tomb of Jesus. Even in Jesus' death, Mary Magdalene continued to serve.*

Celebrating Passover is a Jewish tradition that plays a profound role in the resurrection narrative. The Passover lamb symbolized salvation and deliverance. This parallels the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus. It shows us how God planned the connection between Passover and Jesus' resurrection. The first Passover, as described in Exodus, had the Israelites take the blood of the lamb and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel so that the Death Angel would pass over that house. The Jewish tradition is highlighted throughout the Bible. It is no accident that Jesus' crucifixion occurred around the time of the Passover. It was a part of His divine story. Jesus was the perfect Lamb.

The resurrection of Jesus has a meaning beyond God raising Him from the dead. While that is certainly true and means that our foretold Messiah has indeed conquered death, it has a spiritual meaning for us now. It touches the very core of our existence. It transcends religious (not Biblical) doctrine. It is not only about Jesus' coming back to life, but also about transformation, renewal, and the triumph of the Holy Spirit over limitation. It symbolizes our rebirth, our second chance, and our victory of light over darkness. The resurrection gives us the ultimate hope of eternal life.

Through His resurrection, we are assured of our own resurrection, which brings us transformation and encourages us to live boldly. Resurrection carries a message of hope to humanity. We leave behind our old state and are free from what can no longer serve us as followers of Jesus. We can let go of the past and embrace the transformation and find our purpose given before the foundation of the world. Jesus' victory is our victory. It is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to share this wonderful news with others so that they, too, may have this life-giving promise. We need to be as excited as Mary Magdalene. Unlike Mary, we *can* cling to Jesus. Mary saw him physically, but we see Jesus with our hearts.



SEEING IS BELIEVING



Eddy Espinosa
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2014

John 20:24-29 *We can't imagine the overwhelming grief of the disciples. Hopelessness, sadness, anger, lostness, and confusion were all a part of their emotional trauma. After Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus appeared to the disciples while they were in hiding. Thomas was not there. When told that Jesus had risen from the grave and they had seen him with their own eyes, Thomas, like most of us, attempted to protect himself from more disappointment and pain. It was clear that Thomas was afraid to hope again.*

We live in a world that says, "When I see it, I will believe it." But our life of faith does not work that way. God's economy is often the opposite of what the world says. 2 Corinthians 5:7 says *we walk by faith, not by sight.*

Thomas had doubts, and if we are honest, we all have moments of doubt in our lives. It is a natural part of faith. Thomas represents the struggle of faith without proof. This passage gives us permission to express our doubts and not let them become barriers to our faith. I love how Jesus did not reprimand Thomas for doubting but instead extended grace to him by inviting him to come see and touch His wounds. That grace Jesus extended to Thomas is the same grace Jesus extends to all who doubt.

The main point of this passage is Jesus' statement that *blessed are those who have not seen yet have believed.* Jesus calls us to embrace a life of faith and trust in Him, even when we cannot see how things may work out. We see later in the passage Thomas' transformation when he allowed his belief to transform his understanding of who Jesus is in his declaration, "My Lord and my God."

Do you find yourself in a situation where you are not sure how issues or situations in your life will work out, or you don't understand how God can fix your mess? You are in a perfect place to trust God and believe. Don Moen wrote a song many years ago called "God Will Make a Way." That song said, "God will make a way, where there seems to be no way, he works in ways we cannot see, he will make a way for me."

My friend, trust God and believe.

IN THE NEW BEGINNING



Dr. Michael Gossett
GABC Member / Staff
Since 2019

John 21:4-11 is not just another fish story. It is a story of the disciples doing ordinary things, fishing. Then the extraordinary happens; Jesus appears to them for the 3rd time since His resurrection. He speaks to them, performs a miracle, and encourages them to have breakfast... extraordinary within the ordinary.

After the resurrection, the disciples returned to what they knew. They went fishing on the Sea of Galilee. It is almost hard to believe that after seeing the risen Lord, they still went back to old routines. Maybe they did not know what else to do. Maybe they were unsure how to live on the other side of failure.

I understand that feeling. Years ago, I was still a firefighter waiting for an assignment in ministry. I knew I was called to ministry, but I felt stuck in the motions and routines of life. Then, in the quiet, I was reminded by God's Word that the Lord was not done with me. Like Peter, I just needed to hear the voice of the Lord again.

"Friends, you don't have any fish, do you?" That question from Jesus exposed both their emptiness and His kindness. They had worked all night and caught nothing. But at His word, everything changed. One simple act of obedience turned their emptiness into abundance.

When John recognized Jesus, Peter jumped into the water. He did not wait. He did not measure the risk. He just went. That is what happens when grace restores you. It pulls you toward the Lord who gives.

John 21 is not just a story about fish. It is about renewal. It is about Jesus meeting people who had failed and inviting them back into His purpose. Around a fire of restoration on that shore, Peter was reminded that his worst moment did not define him. Christ's mercy did.

Easter ends where it really begins. It is with Jesus meeting us in our weakness and giving us a new beginning. The risen Lord still stands on the shore of your life and calls out to those who feel alone, distant, or too far gone. Every morning that you wake up is another reminder that resurrection power is still at work. You are not too far gone, you are not too distant, and you are not alone. Jesus is calling. He is waiting. Are you ready?

Prayer: Lord, Jesus, thank you for meeting me in my failures and not leaving me there. Thank you for calling me to yourself. Restore my job, renew my strength, and help me live each day in the power of your resurrection. Use me, Lord, for your Kingdom and for your purpose, and help me to surrender daily to you. Amen.



gabc.org



TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH THE TRUTH OF JESUS



gabc.org