



IN THE  
**Strength**  
OF THIS  
FOOD

— 1 KINGS 19:8 —

LENT 2019

*A Devotional Resource for Prayer, Reflection and Remembrance*

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

## LENT 2019

—  
*Getting Started*

Those of us who grew up in Evangelical and Pentecostal backgrounds may struggle a bit because we are unfamiliar with the rhythms of Mainline or Catholic traditions. For those who grew up following the church calendar, we might struggle with Lent because it's associated with legalism or dead religion. But we believe that Lent can only be correctly viewed through the lens of Jesus.

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, which launches 40 days of prayer and fasting—representing Jesus' 40 days in the wilderness. The last week of Lent is called Holy Week, during which we remember Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday), the Last Supper with His disciples (Maundy Thursday) and His death on the cross (Good Friday). The season officially ends on Holy Saturday, the day before Easter.

Think about a 40-day journey of fasting. Elijah, the prophet, was saddened by the condition of the people of God. He had done a great miracle to turn his people back to God, yet, when it came down to it, the leadership and the people did not really want to change. In his heartbreak and grief, he ran.

His pain was so deep that he went to the wilderness to die. There are so many things that can burden us and grieve us in life: broken relationships, unfulfilled dreams, and unmet expectations can often drive us to the barren land of despair.

The wilderness is the place God uses to reconnect us with Him, to refocus us on His mission and sustain us as we seek His will above our own. These are the conditions where God often does His deepest, most thorough, and fulfilling work.

In the moment when Elijah was the most despairing, God met him with amazing provision of bread. God was going to sustain him on the long and arduous journey with amazing encounters: hearing God's voice, experiencing God's presence, and receiving fresh commissioning.

Today, we are entering into a time of fasting, silence, solitude, self-denial and prayer because we are grieved by the fruitlessness of our lives. We're broken hearted over the sin that so easily entangles us and distracts us from whole-hearted devotion to Jesus. We've had enough of easy answers and platitudes about things getting better. We want to hear God's voice. We want it for our church, our city, our region, our country, and our world!

The elders of Jubilee Church invite you to join us on this 40-day journey to engage your whole person through a variety of ageless disciplines to receive a fresh sense of commissioning from our Savior.

## Schedule

ASH WEDNESDAY  
*Wednesday, March 6, 2019*  
*Joel 2:1-2, 12-17*

WEEK ONE  
*Sunday, March 10, 2019*  
*Luke 4:1-13*

WEEK TWO  
*Sunday, March 17, 2019*  
*Genesis 15:1-12, 17-18*

WEEK THREE  
*Sunday, March 24, 2019*  
*Isaiah 55:1-5*

WEEK FOUR  
*Sunday, March 31, 2019*  
*Psalms 32*

WEEK FIVE  
*Sunday, April 7, 2019*  
*Philippians 3:4b-14*

PALM SUNDAY  
*Sunday, April 14, 2019*  
*Luke 19:28-40*

EASTER SUNDAY  
*Sunday, April 21, 2019*  
*Acts 10:34-43*

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

ASH  
WED

March 6, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
*Joel 2:1-2; 12-17*

## Devotional

The prophet Joel was shown a scene of great distress. The people of Israel were in the overwhelming darkness of idolatry and greed. Their senses had long been dulled to God's presence and it would take a trumpet blast to shake them out of the deep sleep they had been lulled into.

The journey into darkness is a subtle one. We make little compromises here and there. The light begins fading like the sun going down in the evening. We don't realize that clouds and gloom are overtaking the bright blue skies of righteousness. We don't realize that our trajectory is toward a dark night, rather than a glorious day.

It takes a trumpet blast to stir us out of our comfort with the presence of sin. Often God uses pain to rouse us awake.

- Relationship breakdowns
- Job losses
- Health crises

All these things can have the effect of feeling like more darkness; it can feel like the earth is giving way underneath us. But Joel indicates that these painful and frightening circumstances are God's way of getting our attention.

“We can ignore even pleasure. But pain insists upon being attended to. God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains: it is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”

**THE PROBLEM OF PAIN**  
**C.S. Lewis**

Perhaps God is speaking to you now in some very painful circumstances, and you are ready to turn back to Him. But you don't have to wait for pain and darkness. Joel gives us hope-filled words: “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning;”

Ash Wednesday is like a trumpet blast to awaken the church out of the slumber and sluggishness of “overheated consumerism; easy, conventional violence; and limitless acquisitions.”

**A WAY OTHER THAN OUR OWN**  
**Walter Brueggemann**

How do we return to God? We return with all the adornments of humble grief: a broken heart, fasting, and weeping. This is no time to dig in our heels in pride and self-justification. This is a time to grow in awareness that pride and self-justification are what keep us from returning to God.

We return with an urgency that cannot be put off until tomorrow. Joel tells nursing mothers to hold off on feeding time, and brides and grooms to postpone their wedding day. We can put so many things up in front of our relationship with God as more urgent and perhaps more important, but without Him there is no life, and there is no blessing! Return to Him, first!

## Prayer

Righteous God,  
in humility and  
repentance we bring  
our failures in caring,  
helping, and loving,  
we bring the pain we  
have caused others,  
we bring the injustice  
in society of which  
we are a part, to the  
transforming power  
of your grace. Grant  
us the courage to  
accept the healing  
you offer and to turn  
again toward the  
sunrise of your reign,  
that we may walk  
with you in the  
promise of peace  
you have willed for  
all the children of the  
earth, and have  
made known to us  
in Christ Jesus.

Amen.

## Reflection

- What are some painful situations you are facing right now? How are these situations awakening you to repentance?
- How do creature comforts and consumerism numb your heart to God's presence?
- What are some things that seem more important to you than your relationship with God? What keeps you from feeling the urgency to return to God?

## Next Steps

- Commit to fasting at least one day per week during Lent.
- Commit to using this devotional through Lent.

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

WEEK  
ONE

March 10, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
Luke 4:1-13

## Devotional

Jesus, freshly baptized in water and the Holy Spirit, is led into the wilderness of Judea for a time of testing. Forty days of wandering in the wilderness with nothing to sustain him but his relationship with God. You might think that the only voice that would catch his ear is the affirming voice of God, but then we read that there is another voice in the wilderness: the tempting voice of our accuser, the devil.

The essence of the temptation is “Why should you suffer?”

“Satan had one aim in the wilderness: to do whatever he could to keep Jesus from suffering. He was willing to let Jesus have all the glory and authority of a world ruler if he just wouldn't gain it through suffering. He was eager to let Jesus use his divine power if he would just use it to relieve his suffering. He was willing to let all the worshipers in Jerusalem see and acknowledge his divine sonship if only the angels of God would keep Jesus from suffering.”

**John Piper**

We should not be surprised that when we are setting our attention on God and trying to follow our desire to be with Him, that there would be another voice mocking us and seducing us with promises of ease, and the monotonous lull of familiar accusations.

How do we develop a discerning ear to pick up the voice of God and ignore the voice of temptation?

The Word of God is Jesus' weapon of choice, but be careful, Satan loves to use the Word of God too. He will use it to appeal to our vanity by challenging us to live carelessly. He will use it to appeal to our desire for impact and influence by bowing to power structures that give advantage to the rich and powerful instead of using power to care for the vulnerable and marginalized. He will appeal to our appetites to feed ourselves crumbs when God wants to serve others through us.

It's so tempting to want to take things easy; to believe that we can follow Jesus without suffering, hardship, or inconvenience. Resisting this temptation could mean getting up a few minutes earlier to spend time with God in his Word, sharing the gospel with a friend, learning to be financially generous, or engaging in community, even when it seems inconvenient. You might hear the enemy whisper something like:

- “If you are a Christian and the Spirit of God is in you, why do you need to read your Bible?”
- “If you are a Son of God by faith, then why do you need to be in community? You don't really need other people.”
- “If God owns everything why do you need to give offerings, or tithe? Doesn't God want to prosper you? You can't have all this stuff if you keep giving so much money away.”

## Prayer

God of wilderness and water, your Son was baptized and tempted as we are. Guide us through this season, that we may not avoid struggle, but open ourselves to blessing, through the cleansing depths of repentance and the heaven-rending words of the Spirit.

Amen.

“To experience the richness of life in God's kingdom, we must reorder our lives. We need to see through the shallow promises of our culture, and we need rhythms, signposts, and practices that reorient us to another world.”

***RECAPTURING THE WONDER: TRANSCENDENT FAITH  
IN A DISENCHANTED WORLD***  
***Mike Cospers***

These temptations may come over us now, or they may seek a more opportune moment. But as we move through Lent we are profoundly aware that Jesus is calling us to discern his voice in the midst of our wilderness wanderings.

## Reflection

- How do you relate to Jesus' wilderness wanderings right now?
- What are some temptations you are experiencing?
- How are you combating temptations that you are currently facing?
- How do you sense the Spirit is leading you through this time?

## Next Steps

- Spend at least one hour in silence and solitude, to listen for the voice of God.
- Share what you are learning with your community group.

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

WEEK  
TWO

March 17, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
Genesis 15:1-12; 17, 18

## Devotional

It always seems like the time it takes to get to a new destination is longer than the time it takes to come back. Time seems to slow down when you are going to new destinations; the terrain is unfamiliar and the directions are unclear. It can seem like the trip will go on forever.

God called Abram and Sarai and told them to go, but He didn't give them directions. He told them they had a multitude in their destiny, but didn't tell them when. Years had passed and they had been traveling with no sense of arrival, but God spoke, giving more clarity and direction.

God speaks to Abram and calls him into a covenant. Usually a covenant is made so that both parties need to hold up their end of the bargain. The animals are split in two and both parties walk through, essentially saying that if you break the covenant, this is what will happen to you. In this case, Abram sleeps while God's invisible hand carries a torch through the animal carcasses. In other words, God is committing himself to the punishment, even if Abram fails to keep up his end of the bargain.

“Oh Abraham, Abraham,” God is saying, and to all of us, “Oh world, I will bless you no matter what. Even if it means that my immortality must become mortal. Even if my glory must drown in darkness. Even if I have to literally be torn to pieces.” And he was, because centuries later, darkness came down on Mt. Calvary, thick darkness, and in the midst of the darkness there was God in the person of Jesus Christ and he was literally being torn to pieces. Nails, spears, thorns...why? He was taking the covenant curse.

**Timothy Keller**

So it was that Abram believed the Lord that day. His belief was counted to him as righteousness. We have also received righteousness as the free gift of God because He made a covenant with us when Jesus was torn at the cross.

## Prayer

God of the covenant,  
in the glory of the  
cross your Son  
embraced the power  
of death and broke  
its hold over your  
people. In this time  
of repentance, draw  
all people to yourself,  
that we who confess  
Jesus as Lord may  
put aside the deeds  
of death and accept  
the life of your  
kingdom.

Amen.

## Reflection

- How do you relate to Abram's questioning of God's faithfulness?
- What are some ways that you have imagined God fulfilling His promises?
- How has God confirmed He will fulfill His promise?

## Next Steps

- Pray for three people you know who are not Christians.
- Who needs to hear the good news of God's covenant?  
Who will you share with this week?

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

WEEK  
THREE

March 24, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
*Isaiah 55:1-9*

## Devotional

Lent is a season of deprivation and self-denial for the purpose of refocusing our hearts' longings and desires. Our thoughts and desires are earthbound, unrighteous, and even wicked. We become so very content with whatever we can produce to fill us and even fulfill us.

God speaks to Isaiah about longing, desire, and hunger that can never be satisfied by the things that this world values and holds in high regard. He speaks in terms of things that we understand, but even then He invites us, He implores us to open up our ears and draw close so that we can hear what seems so very foreign to us.

His thoughts and ways are definitely higher than ours. We work, we spend, we long for, and we hunger for things that will not satisfy us. Jesus echoes this short-sighted desire that we have:

*But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.*

**Matthew 6:30-32**

God is not afraid of big desires. In fact He reveals that it isn't that our desires are too big...they are too small. We over want things that are going to disappear like mist, but *under* want things that really satisfy.

“If we consider the unblushing promises of reward...promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

***The Weight of Glory***  
**C.S. Lewis**

King David bears witness to bigger, and more passionate desires for God and His presence in Psalm 63:5-6—

*My soul will be satisfied as with fat and rich food,  
and my mouth will praise you with joyful lips,  
when I remember you upon my bed,  
and meditate on you in the watches of the night;*

God's presence is considered to be the most exciting, most exhilarating, and life-full-filling presence!

## Prayer

God of infinite goodness, throughout the ages you have persevered in claiming and reclaiming your people. Renew for us your call to repentance, surround us with witnesses to aid us in our journey, and grant us the time to fashion our lives anew, through Jesus Christ our Savior.

Amen.

Apathy about God, His presence and His ways in our lives is not a small thing. Our lack of hunger, thirst and desire for God is unrighteous and wicked. The call to our apathetic hearts is to return to the Lord, now!

Now is the time to seek the Lord: it's always in the continuous present tense. He will show us mercy. He will abundantly pardon. This is another way that God's ways and thoughts exceed our own. He is always ready to receive the humble, thirsty and hungry one who will only have his or her desires satisfied in God and God alone!

## Reflection

- What are some things that you are pursuing and working for that simply aren't satisfying to you?
- How are you seeing those desires as unrighteous or wicked?
- How do you relate to David's excited sleeplessness because of God's presence?
- What are some ways that you have imagined God fulfilling His promises?
- How has God confirmed He will fulfill His promise?

## Next Steps

- Abstain from social media this week. Devote the time that you would normally use for social media for seeking God.
- Read Psalm 63 and journal about the passionate language David uses to describe his affections for God.

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

WEEK  
FOUR

March 31, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
Psalm 32

## Devotional

Selah. It's not a word that we know much about. Outside of reading the Psalms, it's probably not a word you ever come across. It means to raise up, or exalt, but it's usually used at the end of a phrase to indicate a musical pause. It gives us the opportunity to pause for a moment, not to let our thoughts wander, but to consider what has just been said. It's a point where the music continues, but the lyrics stop.

This Psalm pauses three times for us to lift up our thinking and consider what has just been said before we dive into the next thought. It gives us a chance to collect our thoughts, and to focus them God-ward.

It can feel like pushing pause on life is impossible. We have so many things we need to do, want to do, and dream of doing. The future presses in on us, and we feel like we're in perpetual motion. How do we push pause?

Not only that, we look back over our shoulders and we fear that the past will catch up to us, and we can feel nagging regrets: "Why did I...Why didn't I...If only I had..." breathing down our necks.

Past regret and future anxiety seem to torture us. We want to rest, but we stubbornly resist God's instruction, His warning, and His counsel, somehow believing that if we just keep moving we'll get the comfort, the rest and the peace somewhere down the road.

Lent is a signal to us to push pause. Stop! Look! Listen! Consider what God is saying here!

You can misunderstand God's loving and guiding hand and stubbornly go on in your own ways, but please begin to see that attitude for what it is. When you continue to hang on to your sin, and push away from God's mercy and grace, you must realize that this is wickedness. He lovingly warns you that you don't have to experience the oppressive torment of your sin.

You do not have to be driven by past regrets, and you don't need to run headlong into an uncertain future. God speaks into your pressurized experience and offers to be the cooling, refreshing shelter in the oppressive heat of your regret. He invites you to fix your eyes on Him for future direction. He wants you to enjoy His presence in unconditional, steadfast, and unchanging love!

## Prayer

Eternal lover of our wayward race, we praise you for your ever-open door. You open your arms to accept us even before we turn to meet your welcome; you invite us to forgiveness even before our hearts are softened to repentance. Hold before us the image of our humanity made new, that we may live in Jesus Christ, the model, pioneer and first-born of your new creation.

Amen.

## Reflection

- How are you dealing with the regrets of the past?  
~ The anxiety of the future?
- When was the last time you took time to confess sin?
- How has confession relieved you? How has it made you more joyful?

## Next Steps

- Deputize a close friend or two to confess to.
- Set aside a half day for silence and solitude.  
~ Leave behind anything that might be a distraction.  
~ Take pen, notebook and Bible.
- Pray
- Read Scripture
- Journal your thoughts
- Worship

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

WEEK  
FIVE

April 7, 2019

SCRIPTURE READING  
*Philippians 3:4b-14*

## Devotional

I want to know Christ...

- and the power of his resurrection.
- and the sharing of his sufferings.
- by becoming like him in his death.

Not exactly material that supports an American mindset that life is all about health, wealth, and prosperity! Definitely not the kinds of things people who are born into a typical religious household are prone to say.

Paul's religious heritage would have pointed him in the direction that his religious past was the most important thing about him. He was, at one time, very proud of his title, his religious accolades, and the degrees and titles that followed his name. But his pride, self-righteousness and religious striving were not taking him closer to God but driving him further from God.

“Before Paul was converted to Christ, he thought of religion like a ladder. ‘Out of my goodness, I will seek to get God and other people to give me what I want in my inner emptiness; that is, a feeling of approval or worth.’”

**THE DANGER OF RELIGION**  
**Rick Thomas**

We are all prone to this type of religion. We want others to think well of us. We want to be the hero or heroine of the story. But Paul is now taking a very different approach to life.

The Christian life is not a ladder of ascent to power, prestige, and popularity. It is descending into vulnerability, weakness and self-denial; laying aside all that this world, both religious and irreligious, find so compelling, so that we might have the true treasure of life: Christ!

Paul is super transparent that while he deeply desires to know and be like Jesus, he is still a long way from possessing the fullness of those desires. He is still grappling with the implications of knowing Jesus in all aspects of life, from highest of highs, to lowest of lows.

We could get the idea that Paul is always in striving mode because he is trying to earn something from God again. Maybe Christianity really is just another category of good advice, rather than the good news we thought it was.

But in verse 12, he makes a claim, THE claim that shows us so very clearly that Paul is not saying that he is earning anything from God: “...but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.”

If you are in Christ, you are firmly in His grasp. He has made you his own. This is the good news of the gospel.

Paul's great struggle, and yours is to make Christ's claim on your life a reality in every aspect of human existence! For this reason you “press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

## Prayer

© Lord Jesus, gentle and humble of heart, full of compassion and maker of peace, you lived in poverty and suffered persecution to save humanity. You chose the cross as the path to glory to show us the way of salvation. May we receive the word of the Gospel joyfully and live by Your example as heirs and citizens of Your forever kingdom.

Amen.

You can be secure in the fact that Jesus has you. He has laid hold of you by his grace and mercy. Now, in that secure foundation, put all of your energy into knowing Him! You can let go of everything that you once found so precious and discover that he is the most precious treasure!

“To experience the richness of life in God's kingdom, we must reorder our lives. We need to see through the shallow promises of our culture, and we need rhythms, signposts, and practices that reorient us to another world.”

**RECAPTURING THE WONDER: TRANSCENDENT FAITH  
IN A DISENCHANTED WORLD**  
*Mike Cospser*

These temptations may come over us now, or they may seek a more opportune moment. But as we move through Lent we are profoundly aware that Jesus is calling us to discern his voice in the midst of our wilderness wanderings.

## Reflection

- What are some ways you have experienced God in your highest moments?
- How have you identified with Christ in your lowest moments?
- How do you work out the implications of identifying with Christ in his death?

## Next Steps

- Engage in fasting this week. This would be a good time to extend yourself by either increasing the amount of time you fast, or the things you choose to fast from.
- Journal about how suffering in this life draws you closer to God, and causes you to trust him more.

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

## PALM SUNDAY

April 14, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
Luke 19:28-40

## Devotional

Palm Sunday marks a real transition in the story of Jesus. He's been staying out of the limelight as much as possible for the past three and a half years, but now if his disciples don't pour out exuberant, public praise for the mighty works of God through Jesus, then all nature will break out in chorus!

What man in his right mind would receive such praise? This is the kind of worship that only God should have and desire from His creation!

The theology of Jesus, the Christ, is that he is not only man; he is God!

“The fact that the infinite, omnipotent, eternal Son of God could become one person with finite man, will remain for eternity the most profound miracle and the most profound mystery in all the universe.”

**BIBLE DOCTRINE**  
**Wayne Grudem**

Jesus deserves, not just a multitude of people, but all of creation to praise him with loud and joyful voices!

For God to become man, he didn't strip himself of deity, he “emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, and being in the form of a man...he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.” **Philippians 2:7-8**

He didn't leave his deity behind; rather, he wasn't grasping, he was serving, he was humbling, and he was submitting himself willingly to the Father's will.

There was no impropriety in the way that the disciples were praising Jesus. It was loud, it was boisterous, and it was extremely demonstrative, but they were not wrong in their raucous celebration. There were those who wanted them to quiet down and be more reserved and respectful in their worship, but it was the detractors who were wrong. It was those who wanted the worship of Jesus to be hushed and covered up who were out of line.

Jesus, the Son of God, was certainly not put off by their display of celebration. In fact, he goes even further. If our humanly praise of God is hushed up, then even inanimate objects will raise a ruckus.

Sure, there are times for quiet reflective worship. Of course there is space for mourning, grieving and lamenting in our full-spectrum adoration of Jesus. But do not be dismissive of full-throated shouting and undignified dancing in boasting of our Savior, Jesus! Give yourself to it! Don't hold back! Don't let the rocks beat you to it!

## Prayer

Oh Father, “I’m happy from the inside out, and from the outside in, I’m firmly formed. You canceled my ticket to hell—that’s not my destination! Now you’ve got my feet on the life path, all radiant from the shining of your face. Ever since you took my hand, I’m on the right way.”

Psalm 16:9-11  
The Message

## Reflection

- What holds you back from expressing boisterous delight in church worship settings?
- When was the last time you gave yourself permission to praise Jesus with every part of your being?
- How has pausing to think about who Jesus is brought you to loud shouts of joy and acclamation?

## Next Steps

- Attend Jubilee on Palm Sunday and give yourself to whole-bodied worship!
- Joyful hearts are generous hearts. Pray and ask God to help you give a generous gift to Jubilee’s Next Resource initiative, or to church planting efforts.

# IN THE Strength OF THIS FOOD

## EASTER SUNDAY

April 21, 2019

—  
SCRIPTURE READING  
Acts 10:34-43

## Devotional

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead blew a massive hole in the wall between God and humanity! Not only did it blow a hole in that wall, but it completely destroyed the wall that separates humans from one another.

God shows no partiality. There is always a subtle deception in our hearts that God favors good people, or He favors the rich, or maybe He simply favors me, and people like me. On one hand we can begin to think, "That's nice, God loves other people who aren't like me." But that line of thinking demonstrates the barriers that we have around our hearts to people who are not like us.

This truth points to something about Jesus that we may not actually want to hear: he is the one ordained by God to judge the living and the dead.

Now, you may think that an impartial judge is a good thing. We think that way because we view ourselves as virtually guiltless; "I mean, sure I'm not perfect, but surely Jesus will overlook my faults?"

You see, we're depending on God to have some kind of favoritism because our sins don't seem to us as bad as what our neighbor does.

Jesus is impartial. All of humanity has proven, again and again, that we don't really want God, the supreme ruler and judge of the universe. We want some version of God that is more like us.

We haven't moved much from where Adam and Eve left off. We still believe we can hide behind our fig leaves and avoid his piercing gaze. We still look at one another with judging eyes of suspicion. Rather than filling the earth with the truth of God's goodness, we have spread the lie that God is not to be trusted. He is biased. He's holding out on us.

So, God came to be with us in the person of Jesus. He came as one of us, but he didn't live life hiding from God. He lived a sinless life, yet experienced the best and worst that life under the sun has to offer. The eternal God experienced being human from conception through death, yet with no sin. He spared nothing; held nothing back!

This righteous and unbiased Judge did not come delivering terms of war, but of peace! He came proclaiming good news. He came bringing healing to the wounds of our own creation. He came declaring freedom from our great oppressors: sin and death! He came doing good for all!

What is the human response to pure goodness? Crucify him!

The goodness of Jesus didn't bring out the best in us, as we might like to think. It brought out the worst in us.

"But God!"

There are few phrases in all of life that bring such relief into our murderous guilt and shame. We crucified him, but God raised him up!

Give praise to God! He raised Jesus from the dead and now the Judge of the living and the dead offers us forgiveness of our sins!

Today, we celebrate new life. We joyfully anticipate an eternity with Jesus, our loving, healing, and forgiving King!

He is Risen!

## Prayer

Judge of the living and the dead, you made the world in beauty, and restore all things in glory through the victory of Jesus Christ. We pray that, wherever your image is still disfigured by poverty, sickness, selfishness, war and greed, the new creation in Jesus Christ may appear in justice, love, and peace, to the glory of your name.

Amen.

## Reflection

- How have you experienced the depth of your own sin?
- How have you experienced the depth of sins against you?
- How has the goodness of Jesus met the evil in your own heart?
- How does the hope of the resurrection fill your heart with joy?

## Next Steps

- Who do you know who needs to hear the goodness that Jesus forgives our sins and offers us eternal life?
- Share your story with these friends