



*Week of Passion*

---

DEVOTIONS FOR HOLY WEEK 2019

BRIARWOOD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Grace and Peace to you in the name of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our Pastoral Staff has provided a devotional for Holy Week that follows the Seven Words of Christ on the Cross. Our desire is that this will be powerfully used in your life as God's Word speaks to your heart. May we encourage you to take advantage of the special worship services during Holy Week as we move toward the celebration of the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

Palm Sunday, we honor our Lord's triumphal entry. Prayerfully consider making use of the Saturday evening prior to Palm Sunday and Palm Sunday evenings when the Chamber Ensemble will present Bach's "Christ Lay in Death's Dark Prison" along with hymns led by Jeremy Moore and his band. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to bring your friends and family to hear the Gospel.

Maundy Thursday is the night that the Passover was transformed and translated from the Old Covenant Meal anticipating the Lamb to the New Covenant Meal, which declares the sacrifice of the Lamb, The Lord's Supper.

At noon on Good Friday we will assemble in the Worship Center for a Service of Relection on the Cross, with Bible readings and the singing of the great Atonement hymns.

On Saturday, there will be no services as we commemorate the "resting" of our Savior in the grave on the Old Covenant Sabbath.

Then comes Resurrection Sabbath, the Lord's Day, as we celebrate the Resurrection of our Savior with a Sunrise service at 6:30 a.m. and our worship services at 8:00 and 10:55. What a great privilege to declare on that day that He is Risen!

On Sunday evening at 6:00 p.m. we will conclude Holy Week with a celebration of music with our Music Staff and Professionals in concert. Please join us and bring your friends and family to give praise to the Lord.

Throughout this week, we'll be retracing the steps of our Savior from the Word of God. I believe by following this pattern, your appreciation and participation in Resurrection Sabbath, the Day of the Lord's triumphant Resurrection, will be greatly enhanced. May the Lord use this week in an extraordinary way as we praise His Holy Name. Respectfully, I remain your servant for Christ's sake and...

Gripped by the Gospel,



Harry L. Reeder III

## Day One – Words of Forgiveness

*But Jesus was saying, “Father forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing. AND THEY CAST LOTS, DIVIDING UP HIS GARMENTS AMONG THEMSELVES.”*  
~Luke 23:34

### Read Luke 23:26–34

On the cross, Christ’s first words petition His Father for pardon for his torturers and by extension us. In the soul of Jesus, there was no resentment, no anger, and no lurking desire for punishment upon these men. His first concern is to seek forgiveness for them. In doing so, Christ’s displays God’s gracious love, which rises above His suffering for those who gamble away their future. In praying for forgiveness, He shows mercy, for He overlooks their ignorant evil-doing (John 15:21; Acts 13:27; Eph. 4:18).

How difficult it is to forgive others? Daily, I hear a litany of resistance, “Forgive? Are you kidding me? After what she has done to me, how can I forgive her? He doesn’t deserve to be forgiven. Forgive him, he never forgave me.”

What is forgiveness, and why is it so hard to forgive? Forgiveness is “the act of setting someone free from a personal debt that is a result of a wrong done against you.” The definition covers three concerns: 1) a wrong, 2) a debt resulting from the wrong, and 3) a removal of the debt. Humanly, most people cannot get over the personal hurt and injury. Lacking forgiveness, the wall of debt mounts as the wrong is replayed or renewed. The removal of debt becomes insurmountable. Whatever the wrong and resulting debt, forgiveness does not happen until you are released from the debt obligation. In and of ourselves, we are too spiritually bankrupt to pay the debt. At the cross, we find our answer, for we know forgiveness is on Christ’s heart and His words.

As you meditate on Christ’s first words today, consider what it means to live as a forgiven person (Psalm 32:1,2,5). First, recall your former manner of life without Christ and in rebellion to Him (Psalm 51:3,4) Consider how Christ suffered for our sins. In Isaiah 53:4,5, the prophet states,

Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried; Yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, Smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

Second, remember that we are debtors (Ps. 130:3,4; Matt. 6:12) and bondslaves of sin (Acts 8:23; Rom. 7:14). Christ's death secured our salvation, for a debt that we could not pay (Acts 20:28; Gal. 3:13,14).

Finally, rejoice that your debt has been paid (Matt. 26:28; Eph. 1:7; I John 1:7-9), and you are truly forgiven! Listen to the words of Charles Wesley in the hymn, "And Can It Be?"

Long my imprisoned spirit lay  
Fast bound in sin and nature's night.  
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning ray:  
I woke - the dungeon flamed with light!  
My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
I rose went forth, and followed Thee.  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!

No condemnation now I dread:  
Jesus and all in Him, is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head,  
And clothed in righteousness divine,  
Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
And claim the crown, thru Christ my own.  
Amazing love! How can it be  
That Thou, my God, shouldst die for me!



## Day Two—Words of Redemption

*"Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise." ~ Luke 23:43*

### Read Luke 23:38-43

This passage is a reminder of both the centrality and the contempt for the cross. The crucified King will always be a "stumbling block" and "foolishness" to those who are perishing (I Cor. 1:18-25). God, however, is "well pleased to use the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe" (I Cor. 1:21). The soldiers, the onlookers, and even the criminals hanging on each side of Jesus were hurling abuse and mocking Him (Matt. 27:44;

Mark 15:32). One of the criminals, who at first hurled abuse at Jesus like everyone else, had a “change of heart.” His profession of faith is one of the most moving in Scripture. He began to “fear God.” He acknowledged the justice of God in punishing sinners and recognized that he “justly deserved God’s displeasure and was without hope save in His sovereign mercy” (v. 22). He therefore humbly asked Jesus to be remembered by Him. William Hendriksen has remarked, “The man asked for a blessing in the remote future. He receives a promise pertaining to this very day.” Jesus’ incredible words of redemption are given to this repentant thief: “Today, you shall be with me in Paradise.” On this dark day, Christ brought a converted criminal into the kingdom of grace and hastened him on to glory.

*Devotional Thoughts:*

1. Thank the Lord for His wisdom, justice, power, and pleasure to redeem men and women “through the foolishness of the message preached (I Cor. 1:21).” Keep praying for the lost and preaching the word of the cross to them. Remember that none are beyond the reach of God’s grace. Thank Him that although the death of loved ones brings sadness to us, those who die having responded to Christ’s call to repentance and faith, are not only “remembered” by Him, but are “received” into His presence for all eternity.

2. Meditate on the words of redemption:

a. “Truly I say to you . . .”—The battle is always to fully believe what God has said. “What more can He say than to you He hath said, To you who for refuge to Jesus have fled?”

b. “. . . today . . .”—Now is the acceptable time (II Cor. 6:2). Do not delay or harden your hearts (Heb. 3:13,14). Matthew Henry wrote, “Though it is certain true repentance is never too late, it is as certain that late repentance is seldom true.”

c. “. . . you . . .”—God calls to Himself a people from every tribe, tongue, and nation, yet you will never be lost in the crowd. He knows and loves you.

d. “. . . shall be with Me . . .”—Heaven is primarily being with Christ and enjoying the ultimate relationship with Him. “My knowledge of that life is small; The eye of faith is dim: But it’s enough that Christ knows all; And I shall be with him.

e. “. . . in paradise.”—This ultimate relationship with Christ is carried out for all eternity in a beautiful place or state. The word for paradise means “pleasure garden.” Thank God that, “In His presence is fulness of joy; In His right hand are pleasures forever. (Ps. 16:11)

O the deep, deep love of Jesus, love of every love the best!  
'Tis an ocean full of blessing, 'tis a haven giving rest!  
O the deep, deep love of Jesus, 'tis a heaven of heavens to me;  
And it lifts me up to glory, for it lifts me up to Thee!



## Day Three – Words of Providence

*When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He said to His mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then He said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her into his own household.*

~John 19:26-27

### Read John 19:25-27

Imagine an emerging composer/conductor on the night of his debut at Carnegie Hall conducting his magnum opus, interrupting his performance and laying down his baton to care for his critically injured child. We would hardly expect him to do it.

Here is Jesus performing his magnum opus. He is at the critical point of His career - engaged in a transaction of cosmic proportions - the main player in the pivotal event of all history. In the midst of the agony of bearing the curse of His Father for the sin of the world and the incredible difficulty of focusing all of His being on carrying out this mission successfully, He sees His mother in the crowd nearby and John the apostle standing beside her. She is in agony too. He feels her pain deeply. How can He comfort her? He cannot spare her the pain. Simeon had prophesied that a sword would pierce through her and it was happening (Luke 2:34,35). It would ease her pain if He could help her remember that this event is not simply a tragedy happening to her son, but the fulfillment of the redemptive mission being carried out by her Lord and Savior. Her grief could be seasoned with adoration. She had sung at the beginning, “My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46,47). So, He addresses her affectionately from the cross with a term conveying the sense of “Dear woman” rather than “mother.”

Not only does He seek to comfort her in her grief and lift her sight spiritually, but He arranges for her earthly welfare. John would be the best candidate.

Of all the disciples, he seemed the most understanding, compassionate, and committed. The other disciples are absent at the cross. Her other children are probably not believers and are not present. Nodding to John, He says to Mary, “Woman, behold, your son.” And to John, He says, “Behold, your mother.” John picked up the responsibility fully from that day on.

See how tenderly, wisely, and fully Jesus cares for Mary! This word does not teach us simply that He cares for the most special person in His life. Rather, He treats all of His own with the same measure of specialness. Had He not said earlier, “For whoever shall do the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:50)? Are there any burdens that you bear today that are too trivial for Him to care for?

See how faithfully John carried out Jesus’ appointment for Mary’s care! Who are the Mary’s in your life whom Jesus wants to care for through you? He is not too busy. Are you?



## Day Four - Words of Atonement

*And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” that is, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”*

~Matthew 27:46

On Good Friday, from nine o’clock to noon, Golgotha was the center of activity. By-passers shouted their blasphemies at the condemned. Soldiers cursed their charges as they carried out their duties. The chief priests and scribes scoffed and laughed at those on their crosses. The thieves added their insults.

Then the darkness came. Matthew recounted that there was an unusual darkness that settled down over the land, obscuring the sun until it could be seen no more. What caused this phenomenon? A dust storm? A solar eclipse? The answer is that God brought the darkness. A supernatural darkness came over the land from noon until three p.m. Warren Wiersbe says, “It was a heaven-sent darkness that lasted for three hours. It was as though all of creation was sympathizing with the Creator.”

R.V.G. Tasker writes, “The supernatural darkness, lasting from noon till

three p.m., intensified the desolation, which reaches its lowest depth, when Jesus, ‘made to be sin’ in man’s stead, experiences in all its horror the separation from God that sin creates, and cries, why God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” It was during this time of darkness that Jesus had been made sin for us (II Cor. 5:21). The Father had forsaken him! Darkness pictures the judgment that Christ endured when He was “made a curse” for us (Gal. 3:13). In this judgment of God against sin, God poured out His wrath on Jesus as our substitute.

After three hours, the darkness left. Then Jesus cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” These words are a direct quotation from Psalm 22:1. How could a holy God look with favor on His Son who had become sin? The spectators did not understand Jesus as He spoke in Aramaic and thought He was calling for Elijah to help.

William Hendriksen in his commentary on Matthew helps us understand the mysterious question, “But how could God forsake God?” It is impossible for God to forsake God. The nature of the Trinity makes that impossible for God to forsake God. It is not, however, impossible for the Father to desert the Son’s human nature. That is what happened.

On Christ, our representative, the consequence of sin fell. This was pictured in the Levitical ceremony of laying hands on the scapegoat and confessing the sins of the people (Lev. 16). Jesus is our scapegoat, who died in our place, taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself. One of my favorite theological words is the word, “propitiation.” It means God is satisfied with the payment for our sin. Jesus has satisfied the demands of God. The wrath of God toward sin has been satisfied. In I John 4:10, the Apostle John declared, “In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”



## Day Five – Words of Suffering

*After this, Jesus, knowing that things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scriptures, said, “I am thirsty.”* ~John 19:28

### Read John 19:28–29

The Lord Jesus was not a Divine man or a humanized God. He was all God and all man. His dual nature is one of the most profound mysteries of the Christian faith. How could God “become flesh, and make his dwelling among us” (John 1:14)? While we may not understand it, we are nevertheless confronted with both aspects of Christ’s existence in this short passage. Jesus was God, and as such, He existed to do the will of the Father. Jesus said, “For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me” (John 6:38). We see Jesus’ deity in His fulfillment of Scripture. His suffering was part of God’s plan, and only one who was truly God could endure it. In Philippians 2:8, the Apostle Paul wrote of Jesus, Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Picturing Christ on the cross, we are also confronted with his humanity. Jesus cried, “I am thirsty.” The scene is in itself a fulfillment of prophecy. It refers back to Psalm 69:21. It was an expression of real human anguish. Jesus was not seeking pity, nor was he seeking the alleviation of his sufferings. As A.W. Pink described Christ’s cry, it “gave expression to the intensity of the agonies He was undergoing.”

How can this encourage us? What hope does this give us? Again, Pink wrote, “The Cross shows us that God is not ignorant of our sorrows, for in the person of His Son, He has Himself ‘borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows!’” The Cross shows us God is mindful of our distress and anguish, for becoming incarnate He suffered Himself! The Cross tells us God is not indifferent to pain, for in the Savior, He experienced it!”

Our Redeemer is not so far removed from us that He is unable to enter into our sorrows. Isaiah describes Him as, “A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief” (Isa. 53:3). Do you feel misunderstood by others? Have those nearest you turned away from you? Do you suffer from severe physical pain? Do you experience depression? All of these things, our Lord experienced. Hebrews 2:17 says, “. . . He had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.” Christ identifies with us through His suffering.

## Day Six – Words of Triumph

“It is finished” ~John 19:30

**Read John 19:30–37**

### *Commentary*

Christ’s dying words, “It is finished,” signified the fulfillment of Christ’s redemptive work on earth. Furthermore, Christ “gave up His Spirit” with His head bowed in obedience to His Heavenly Father’s will – not the will of worldly men who had crucified him so mercilessly and deliberately on the cross. “It is finished” was a statement of triumph and exultation according to Matthew Henry, the late seventeenth century reformed theologian. The malice and enmity of His persecutors had done their worst possible deed – impaled Him on a tree as a common thief. The commandment of His Father concerning Christ’s sufferings was finished. The prophecies of the coming Messiah of the Old Testament scripture were fulfilled (v. 36). The ceremonial law is abolished in favor of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world. The work of man’s redemption and salvation was complete. A fountain of grace was opened that shall ever flow as the piercing of Christ’s side brought forth a sudden flow of blood and water that represent ordinances of the Lord’s Supper with blood for atonement of sins, and Baptism with purifying water. Finally, the Apostle John who witnessed the crucifixion wrote, “And he who has seen has testified and his testimony is true . . . so that you also may believe” (v. 35).

### *Devotional Thought: Christ died so we can live!*

Why did Christ die? Christ “gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and to purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Christ died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. As a result of His triumph, we are declared “not guilty” in the court of Heaven. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Romans that when Christ died to sin, Christians begin to die to self, “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in any sin any longer?” (Rom. 6:1-2). Sin no longer has dominion over the Christian’s life.

*Devotional Thought: We live in union with Christ!*

Through Christ's death on the cross we have union with Him that gives us the ability to live lives that are pleasing to God and fulfilling to ourselves simultaneously. Through our union with Christ, the world is crucified to the Christian. The world with its temptations and all its insidious power draws the Christian away from God. As we resist the trappings of worldly sin and draw near to God with humility, Satan flees and God draws nearer to us. If we humble ourselves before God and seek His will, He will exalt us (James 4:7ff). Jesus Himself gave the illustration of our living union with Him as the vine and us as the branches (John 15:1-5). Christ indwells us through His Spirit to prune us and to transform us more and more into His likeness so that we may produce the fruit of the Spirit in our daily lives with Him. It is through our union with Christ that we persevere in the Christian life in a perverse and wicked world around us!



## Day Seven – Words of Commitment

*“Father, into YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” ~ Luke 23:46*

**Read Luke 23:44–49**

### *Setting*

Have you ever heard someone say, or have you ever said, “I am sure glad the Lord did not let me know ahead of time how much this (whatever) was going to hurt”? I can remember very distinctly saying something of that nature about the end of the second year of church planting. Jesus knew exactly what He was facing. In John 6:38, Jesus said, “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me.” He knew that will included rejection and crucifixion in order to accomplish redemption for us. His last words on the cross expressed his manner of life. As the Son of God in eternity past, He committed himself to do the will of God the Father by becoming the incarnate Son of God for the very purpose of living through the rejection and crucifixion. He lived with an attitude of submission. He died with an attitude of submission.

But, He also died with absolute confidence. Notice the family address, “Father.” In the midst of extreme pain this is an address of total emotional confidence. The “into thy hands” represents a rational confidence – I know I can do this. “I commit” represents the action of His will. His total personality gives expression to this final act of submitting His total self (my spirit) to the will of God.

### *Devotional Thought*

What a glorious example for us! If Jesus was able to live out this total submission in the worst situation a human being could ever experience, the bearing of the sin of the world, then surely He is able to enable us to live in total submission to God through the contingencies of our lives. “I do not know what tomorrow may hold, but I do know who holds tomorrow,” someone has said. What a beautiful thought! The one who holds tomorrow has provided me with the ultimate example of submitting myself to God in whatever that contingency may be.

What is your pain in this resurrection season? Have you lost a loved one? Have you been abandoned by your mate or parent? Have you lost a your job or has your business gone sour? Let me encourage you to pray in full confidence with your total being, “Father, into thy hands I commit my Spirit.”



## **Day Eight - He Is Risen!**

We have been walking through the pages of Scripture and the glorious celebration of the greatest week in all of History. The week of our Savior’s Passion, Holy Week. I know these passages of Scriptures and thoughts from our Pastoral staff on the Seven Words of Christ have been of great encouragement. Now, this Day is the greatest Day of that week and all of History. It is by this Day that we declare the Glory of our God that He has come and secured salvation for His people. Perhaps you might like to read the account of the Resurrection (Matthew 28) and then read Romans 4:25.

In Romans 4:25 we are told, our Lord was “delivered up because of our

transgressions.” Why did Jesus go to the cross? His love for us and His willingness to take our sins upon Himself. Then, the text in Romans says, “He was raised because of our justification.” Why was Jesus raised from the grave? It was God’s declaration that His Son had satisfied His holiness. Our sins have been paid for completely. We are forgiven. His resurrection declares our forgiveness and assures our resurrection unto eternal life.

My dear brothers and sisters, fellow pilgrims in this world, headed for the glorious Celestial City of the New Heavens and the New Earth, indwelt by our God, the New Jerusalem; the resurrection of our Savior declares that we are right with God if we are in His Son, Jesus Christ. His Son rules and reigns and is ascended in heaven. He intercedes for us. He is not in a grave. He is Risen! In the book of Acts, that message was declared forcefully and powerfully. The resurrection assumes the atonement and assures our forgiveness and that we will reign forever with Him and it still is to be believed and declared powerfully to the world.

Would you take a few moments . . . spend time in prayer and thoughtfully contemplate the majesty of God’s holiness that His Son would have to die for our sins. The breadth, depth and height of His love, that he would give His only Son for us to pay for our sins. A rejoicing triumph of our Redeemer. He Is Risen . . . He Is Risen indeed! Praise God. Our Day of Jubilee has arrived! Now, come again Jesus; that great next Day on the calendar of redemption when you bring all to consummation, to the glory of your Father to the praise and preeminence of Your Name. Come Again and Come Quickly. Amen.





# *Week of Passion*

---

Schedule *for* Holy Week

Palm Sunday, April 14

*Services of Divine Worship*

8:00 A.M. 10:55 A.M.

*Holy Week Preparation Concert*

6:00 P.M.

Maundy Thursday, April 18

*Communion at the Tables*

7:00 P.M.

Good Friday, April 19

*A Service of Reflection on the Cross*

12:00 Noon

Resurrection Sabbath, April 21

*Sunrise Service*

6:30 A.M.

*Services of Celebration*

8:00 A.M. 10:55 A.M.

*Briarwood Music Staff and Professionals  
in Concert*

6:00 P.M.