

BUILDING A CHRIST-CENTERED COMMUNITY



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Church

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TO REACH OUR COMMUNITY

E A S T E R
glory + grace

HOLY WEEK 2022
DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

Easter

If we're not careful, Easter will come and go and we will have hardly noticed what was just celebrated, except the remnants of chocolate candy staining our kids' new Easter outfits and eggs scattered about strands of shiny fake grass. Our hope with this devotional is to provide something helpful for our families to prepare together to celebrate one of the most glorious events in history and the event that seals our hope as believers in Jesus Christ.

This guide is meant to remind us of what Christ did those last few days of His earthly life and will culminate on Sunday morning as we gather to celebrate His triumph over Satan, sin, and death. We hope it will serve your family as you consider your faith, your hope, your Savior, and your future. We pray you will be refreshed, encouraged, and built up as you meditate together on the truths of these passages.

Use this guide as a family. There are suggested activities for families with younger kids for each day. Use these or your own to bring the passages to life for your kids. Regardless of your kids' ages, read the passages together. Talk about what was going on and what it means for your faith. Pray together and anticipate Easter in a fresh way as a family.

We look forward to celebrating the risen Christ with you Easter morning and pray that the days leading up to it are filled with renewed love and gratitude for what has been done on our behalf.

To Him Be the Glory!

grace + peace

PASSION WEEK:

SUNDAY, 4/10

THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY, JERUSALEM

MONDAY, 4/11

JESUS CLEARS THE TEMPLE & CURSES THE FIG
TREE

TUESDAY, 4/12

AUTHORITY OF JESUS QUESTIONED
JESUS TEACHES IN THE TEMPLE
JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY

WEDNESDAY, 4/13

THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS

THURSDAY, 4/14

THE LAST SUPPER, GETHSAMANE
& JESUS' ARREST

FRIDAY, 4/15

JESUS' CRUCIFIXION, DEATH & BURIAL

SATURDAY, 4/16

DAY OF SILENCE

SUNDAY, 4/17

JESUS' RESURRECTION

SUNDAY

[THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY]

Read MATTHEW 21:1-11

Imagine the man who owned the donkey as he watched the disciples untie his animal and begin to walk away with it. How would you respond? And then the explanation-Jesus said, "If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord needs them.'" The LORD needs them. Apparently, that was enough for the man because Jesus went riding into Jerusalem on that very donkey. Jesus was declaring two things: 1) that he was the promised King who would bring peace to sin-wrought humanity and 2) that he was not the sword-wielding, armor clad warrior the people had expected. Rather, he was meek and humble, resolved to fulfill the purpose of his father.

We tend to cling rather tightly to what we have come to believe is ours. But what if the most powerful person in your country came to you and said, "I have need of _____?" How would you respond then?

Jesus is making a fundamental declaration as passion week begins. He is the King. Those who acknowledge his Kingship submit to his will, those who do not shouted "Crucify him!" just days later.

Jesus came not merely to save you from your sins, but to reign as King over your life and mine. He told the disciples this when he taught them how to pray. "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven." We must come to view our lives through this lens. Though we live in a democracy, we have a King. Are you submitting to his kingship as an individual and as a family? Is he saying, "The Lord has need of it" in any area of your life?

The rest of the passion week teaches us what absolute submission to the Father's will looks like. Are we willing to follow Jesus with the same resolve?

[Q's to consider]

1. What comes to mind when you think of a king?
2. Is it ever difficult to submit to someone else's authority? Why?
3. For kids, is it ever hard to obey your parents? Why?
4. Are there any areas as a family that may need submitted to the kindness of Jesus? Spend time talking about this together. Be honest and commit to help each other submit.
5. Pray together that each member of your family would trust God enough to obey him. Pray the same for your family.

[Suggested Activity]

Discuss with your family how this week you want to be intentional about abstaining from the media so you can concentrate on the events of the week as explained in scripture. Consider abstaining from:

- Watching TV
- Listening to radio
- Going on the computer
- Playing video games
- Reading the newspaper or magazines

Instead, spend your time meditating on these scriptures contemplating on the price of our salvation.

Young ones; Make simple palm branches or cut some from outside to bring in and wave around the house calling our "Hosanna". Have dad give donkey rides as the other wave branches.

MONDAY

[The Temple & The Fig Tree]

READ Matthew 21:12-19

Do you ever wonder what Jesus would do if he were to visit some of the churches that exist in our country? I often wonder what his response would be. Then I wonder what *my* response would be to *his* response. Imagine the upheaval of tables and items and the scene he must have caused.

Here's the problem. "The temple was not fulfilling its God-ordained role as witness to the nations but had become...the premier symbol of a superstitious belief that God would protect and rally his people *irrespective of their conformity to his will*" [D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*].

I wonder if we're ever guilty of this. The temple, as now the church, has quite a specific purpose in God's work, namely, to be the witness to the nations on God's behalf. Remember yesterday, Jesus was declaring his kingship, which means for us "conformity to his will." Now he is declaring his authority over the temple, the place of worship. He is saying, "The One who is greater than the place of worship-He who is to be the Object of worship-is here. He is the Head (Colossians 1:18) and we are to continually seek to submit to his will, for his glory and our good.

According to Matthew's account, the story continues when Jesus then curses a fig tree for not having any fruit. Have you ever wondered why? Jesus found leaves on the tree, but no fruit (v. 19). Figs weren't in season during this time, so why should Jesus curse the tree? Like many parents, Jesus sees this as a teachable moment for his disciples. The point was to teach them about bearing fruit, regardless of the fig season. Jesus "cursed the tree, not because it was not bearing fruit...but because it made a show of life (the leaves) that promised fruit yet was bearing none" [D.A. Carson, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*].

So here Jesus declares his authority over the temple and curses those who look spiritually alive on the outside yet, because of disobedience, produce no fruit. We the Church must heed the warnings of these passages if we are to be found faithful to Christ. He is our king, which means he is our authority. We are his body; he is the head. It is his will that we bear fruit (John 15). We must help guard one another from slipping into an external liveliness while remaining spiritually apathetic. Do you have leaves only, or is their fruit?

[Q's to consider]

1. How do you think our church is doing fulfilling its "God ordained role as witness to the nations?" Is there something your family could do to help our church be more effective as witness?
2. How is your family doing at being a witness in our neighborhood? Is there anything you could do there?
3. Take a couple of minutes and share any fruit you see being born in each other's lives. Use this time to encourage each other. Parents, share with your kids fruit you see in their lives. Pray that you would bear fruit as a family and not merely have nice leaves.

[Suggested Activity]

Plan an Easter egg hunt for your family. Instead of special treats inside the eggs, put junk (trash, coffee grounds, rotten fruit, something broken). Build up the excitement for the hunt and let them gather the eggs but everyone must wait to open them until after the hunt. Gather everyone around and let them begin opening the eggs to discover they are not what they might have expected.

Ask: Are you disappointed? Explain that the eggs are designed to hold candy, coins, or small prizes but were used instead for a purpose other than what they were intended. Jesus felt the same way about the fig tree and the misuse of the Temple. End with a special treat that everyone will enjoy (piece of candy, bowl of ice cream, and egg with a nice treat inside).

TUESDAY

[TEACHING IN THE TEMPLE & JESUS ANOINTED AT BETHANY]

READ Matthew 21:28-32 and talk about which son obeyed. What does obedience look like in your life and in your kids' lives?

READ Matthew 26:6-13 // John **12:1-8**

Do you see a tendency in yourself to offer God what is convenient rather than what He is really worthy of? This woman teaches us the true posture of worship. She had encountered the love and grace of Christ and her only response was to love Him back. Her expression of that love was to barge into a dinner party full of men, break open perhaps the most expensive thing she owned and pour it all over Jesus' head and then wash His feet with her own hair. Does that seem odd to you? I've found myself reading this passage and thinking how inappropriate it all seemed. But this woman cared for nothing but to get to her Savior's feet and love Him with the best she had. She completely lost her self-awareness in the torrent of love for Jesus.

Have we ever loved Jesus this way? Are we so enamored by the radical and ridiculous love of Christ that we lose ourselves just so we can get to His feet to show Him how much we love Him? Or are we too afraid of looking out of place?

Yet there is another thing taking place that is even more significant. In a few days, Jesus will be crucified and this act of love serves to prepare his body for burial, which was customary during this time. Perhaps without Mary even knowing, she is serving a significant role as the passion week progresses towards Christ's crucifixion and burial, his ultimate submission to the will of his Father.

// **consider**

Spend time this morning losing yourself in the reality of God's love for you.

Remember what He has done for you. Remember His grace.

Remember what you have been forgiven of. Don't forget. Ask God to strengthen you to love Him with all of your heart, mind, soul and strength, this week and forever. Look for ways to show your love for Him this week.

[Q's to consider]

1. How do you think you would have felt if you were one of the men sitting with Jesus as Mary washed his feet with her hair?
2. Have you ever wanted to express your love for Christ but were afraid to look foolish?
3. What is one way that you can show your love for Christ this week as you consider his last days before his crucifixion? Try to keep this from being an act of duty or guilt or obligation, but one of sincere love.

[Suggested Activity]

Ask: IF you were face to face with Jesus, what would you like to ask? Listen and please don't make fun of anyone's questions.

Ask: How do you show affection for Jesus? Although we may not physically be in the presence of Jesus now, we can show affection for him by obedience, prayer, studying his words, loving God and loving others.

Jesus is getting ready for what is coming later in the week. Your family could prepare for Easter by making some Easter cards to send to friends and relatives. You could bake some special treats that could be secretly delivered with a note about Jesus. You could begin letting the family decorate the table for a special Easter meal. Pick an activity as a family that you can do to show your affection for Christ as you prepare for Easter.

WEDNESDAY

[THE PLOT AGAINST JESUS]

READ Matthew 26:14-16

Judas was one of Jesus' twelve disciples who had essentially lived life with him constantly for the past three years. Imagine one of your best friends going behind your back and conspiring with an enemy to give you into their hands. Betrayal and disloyalty don't seem severe enough words to describe. Have you ever wondered why Judas would do this? It has bothered me for years. How could a man who walked with Jesus and saw his miracles and heard his teaching and ate with him and experienced his presence come to a place of absolute betrayal? Perhaps it was because Jesus wasn't acting like the king he said he was (remember Sunday's devotion). Perhaps it was because Jesus had rebuked Judas when he complained about Mary wasting her perfume the day before. Perhaps it was simple greed. We may never know except that in God's sovereignty, he used this act to accomplish his ultimate purpose of sacrificing his Son for the sin of the world who had rejected him.

One thing we can learn is that being with Jesus for extended periods of time wasn't enough to ensure obedience and submission to him. The betrayal was bad enough, but there is something to be said of Jesus' supposed worth to both Judas and the chief priests by the price agreed on between them. The price was thirty pieces of silver. According to Exodus 21:32, this was the same amount that was to be paid if a slave was accidentally gored by an ox. Judas and the chief priests surely would have known this, yet they settled on the amount anyway. Knowledge and exposure to Christ mean little compared to how we value him. He is no slave, yet he came as the servant of all. He is creator of all things and all things exist for him (Colossians 1:16-17). He is the King of kings and yet was traded for a handful of coins.

Judas surely knew Jesus. He was well acquainted with him, more than you or I. Yet he did not count him as surpassingly worthy. Paul said that all things were garbage to him because of the "surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Philippians 3:8).

What is Jesus worth to you? How do you esteem him? This will determine how you show affection for him.

[Q's to consider]

1. How much would it take for you to betray your best friend into their worst enemies' hands? (Hopefully they will say they wouldn't. If not, good luck).
2. What is most valuable to you? What would it take to give that up?
3. Where does your relationship with Jesus and your obedience to him rank in the list of things you value?
4. How can you as a family guard against merely being acquainted with Jesus so you can know, love and value him?

[Suggested Activity]

Ask: Has anyone ever let you down? How did you respond? Have you ever been the one to let someone else down?

Have the exact number of eggs for everyone in the family. Have one egg that doesn't have anything in it and all the rest filled with a treat. Pass the eggs out. Let everyone open their egg. Watch the reaction of the one who receives the empty egg. Ask them how it feels to not be treated well. One could become jealous or envious and exhibit some very bad behavior. What happened to Jesus was 100 times worse than things example and he never responded poorly.

Have an extra egg ready to give to the one who received the empty egg.

THURSDAY

[THE LAST SUPPER, GETHSEMANE & JESUS' ARREST]

READ Matthew 26:17-29, 36-46 & 47-27:26

(Decide how much you want to read depending on your family dynamics. The last section, the arrest and trial begins Thursday and extends into Friday.)

If you knew you would die tomorrow, what would you have for your last meal and who would you eat it with? Jesus uses this last supper to provide a symbol of hope not only for the disciples, but for all Christians until he returns. The disciples most likely did not understand exactly what Jesus was doing, but he knew that this was one of his last moments with these men he loved. He also knew that he would soon be entrusting his ministry to them. What this meal represented would serve as the basis for their entire ministry and lives, the new covenant of Christ's blood, replacing the old law-based covenant with his perfect life. This remains our entire hope, only we celebrate this meal after Christ's death when we take communion together. It reminds us that Christ's blood, not how good or bad we are, is our hope for forgiveness and life. We will all drink the final cup of restoration at Christ's return when all things are made new and his perfect kingdom comes.

Jesus is proclaiming what is about to be his greatest test of obedience-the cross. This leads them into Gethsemane and here we see the torment of Jesus' ordeal. Three times Jesus asks his Father that the cup would pass and three times he says, "Your will be done." The "cup" likely refers to what was known in the Old Testament as the cup of God's wrath. Imagine a tsunami-like rush of all God's hatred for the sin and wickedness of every person who has ever lived or who will ever live. Jesus knew this is what he would soon experience.

Jesus would soon be arrested and taken before Caiaphas and Pilate, he would be mocked by men who deserved the wrath he was about to take for them and he would be rejected by the crowd for a murderer named Barabbas. Yet he was leading the way of obedience for those who would esteem him as King and follow him, submitting themselves to his will as he was perfectly submitting himself to the will of his Father. From King to "criminal," he was showing the way of obedience and in doing so, he would make it possible for us to be made righteous before God and saved from the cup of his wrath.

[Q's to consider]

1. If you only had one more meal to eat, what would you eat and who would you eat it with? Why?
2. How would you feel if you knew your father or mother was doing to completely reject you? What emotions would you use to describe it?
3. Do you think Jesus was more tormented by the physical pain that he was going to experience or by the fact that his father, whom he had perfect fellowship with, was going to pour out all his wrath on him and reject him?
4. Do you think the disciples would have stayed awake if they had understood what Jesus was about to go through?

[Suggested Activity]

Many things happened on this day in Jesus' life. Before the really ugly things begin to happen, Jesus shares a meal with his closest friends and tells them some very important things. One of the parents should have a bowl of water and a towel ready to gently begin washing your family's feet. Talk about how Jesus demonstrated being a servant to his friends because that is what he expects us to do. After washing everyone's feet, wash your hands and bring out a loaf of bread and juice. Tailor giving communion to your family that is age appropriate. If your children have not yet accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, just demonstrate taking communion with those members of your family who have. Keep it simple by having a family member read one of the gospel accounts of the Last Supper.

FRIDAY

[JESUS' CRUCIFIXION, DEATH & BURIAL]

READ Matthew 27:27-66

Here is the most horrific and yet one of the most glorious moments in human history. It seems the promised king, the savior, the hope of the nations has come and gone. Years of anticipation and countless hopes crashing to a disappointing halt. An epic failure to many. But in the mind of God, the greatest triumph feasible and the only way to rectify the wrong of sin in humanity. Here, his only Son becomes the curse which He placed on us so that we might be spared from it. "He became sin, who knew no sin, that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

On the cross, we see this fulfilled as Jesus cries out, "Why have you forsaken me?" What was his dread in the garden is now his reality and he is abandoned by his Father, bearing all the world's sin alone.

Ironically, those who mocked Jesus were unknowingly proclaiming the truth about who he was. They foolishly crowned his head with thorns and charged him with being king of the Jews (v. 37), which he was. Those who passed by scoffed, "You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! (v. 40). He was the temple and in three days he would rise and prove them right. "The chief priests, scribes and elders mocked him saying, 'He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the king of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him'" (v. 42) and this crucified king would bring salvation to all who would believe in his name. They continued to mock him for trusting in God and claiming to be his Son. Indeed the Son of God was hanging before them in humble obedience to his Father.

Remember that God will be proved right in the end and every knee will bow and every tongue confess. Those who mocked Christ then will bow in submission and those who mock him now will bow one day. Do not be discouraged by the taunts of unbelievers. Believe in the man who is everything he claimed to be. Hold out the truth for all to see that they might believe in your Savior. Cling ever so tightly all of your days to this glorious hope. It is in Christ's death that we have life because he has suffered all the wrath that once burned against us. Praise God!

[Q's to consider]

1. Spend time today thinking about what Christ did as he hung on the cross. Think about the sacrifice and be reminded of what you have been spared from.
2. If you're unsure about what you believe about Jesus, see him as the Savior who took your punishment and trust him.
3. Parents, talk to your kids about what they believe about Jesus and how they can have forgiveness.

[Suggested Activity]

Have a time of prayer together where you worship God and thank him for the sacrifice he made on your behalf. You can have your kids write their own expression of worship or you can go around your family and thank him together. Have some somber reflection on the cost of our salvation and end it with thanksgiving.

SATURDAY

[IN THE TOMB]

READ Matthew 27:62-66

Day of silence.

Take your family on a walk through a local cemetery. Maintain a quiet and solemn posture. Feel free to talk about death and how it can feel very final. Be sensitive regarding how far to go with this discussion with your kids depending on their ages, but don't shy away from talking about death with them.

Consider reading "An Exhortation to Make Space to Speak of Dying" by Douglas McElvey at the back of this guide.

[Suggested Activity]

To illustrate that Jesus was the perfect lamb who took our place, you could provide a white t-shirt for the kids to write on some sins that they think, say, or do. Write the sins in a messy, haphazard way on the t-shirt. Make big ugly marks as you talk about how sin breaks God's law and that because he is just and good, he must, and will, judge sin. When done, put the t-shirt on someone and let them walk around. Hang the t-shirt up in a visible place in the house.

After the kids go to bed, replace the ugly t-shirt with a new one.

How do you think you would respond to this day of silence following Christ's death?

Journal any thoughts you have today as you think about the cross and the tomb.

Think about how the disciples might have felt.

Day of silence.

RESURRECTION SUNDAY

...because Christ Jesus has made me his own."

Philippians 2:12

Here is one of the most profound truths in all of the Bible. In it rests the entirety of our hope and our faith. **Christ Jesus has made you His own.** When Jesus hung on the tree at Calvary and said that it was finished, He breathed the single greatest victory cry in all of history. At the Resurrection, Death was dead, sin lost its power, Satan was overthrown, and your sin was paid for. For all who have trusted Christ, Satan has lost all claim over you because **Christ Jesus has made you His own.** You are His. He has purchased you. The eternal effects of your sin are dealt with and you are now free to live unto God in every way. The only hope you and I have at living the true Christian life is hidden in the reality that **Christ Jesus has made us His own.** "Your life is hidden with Christ" (Colossians 3:3) and "You have been given FULLNESS in Christ" (Colossians 2:10). That work is finished.

Have you ever come to terms with your wretchedness before God and have you embraced the Grace that has taken that wretchedness and made it His own? Let it sit on your mind and weigh heavy on your heart until it works its way into your soul so that you may boldly and gladly say, "I am Christ's!" Press on toward the great prize of heaven, which is Christ Himself, and make it your own, because **Christ Jesus has made you His own.**

"I must know Jesus Christ as Savior before His teaching has any meaning for me other than that of an ideal which leads to despair. But when I am born again of the Spirit of God, I know that Jesus Christ did not come to teach only: He came to make me what He teaches I should be..."

As long as we have a self-righteous, conceited notion that we can carry out our Lord's teaching, God will allow us to go on until we break our ignorance over some obstacle, then we are willing to come to Him as paupers and receive from Him.

"Blessed are the paupers in spirit," that is the first principle in the Kingdom of God. The bedrock in Jesus Christ's kingdom is poverty, not possession; not decisions for Jesus Christ, but a sense of absolute futility - I cannot begin to do it. Then Jesus says - Blessed are you." (excerpt from My Utmost for His Highest, July 21)

[Q's to consider]

Spend time today thinking on this truth. Sit with it. Think on it. Be still with it. Don't rush. Let it seep down into your soul. Praise God for it. Ask Him your questions regarding its truth. Revel in the fact that you are His and that Satan no longer has any claim over your life. Worship your Savior with adoration and thanksgiving. HE HAS MADE YOU HIS OWN!

[Suggested Activity]

When they discover the new shirt on Easter morning, explain that after Adam and Eve sinned, everyone born since then was born with a desire to sin. God said that sin must be punished. God knew that man would sin and have to be punished, but he would send His only Son to take the punishment for those sins. Jesus, who was perfect and had never sinned, was willing to suffer the punishment we should have received. Ask: Why do you think Jesus did this? (Because He loves us and created us for a relationship with him). Begin Easter morning with a prayer of gratitude that Jesus was willing to take our punishment and take our sins away and make us clean.

Please join our church family in celebrating Easter at one of the following services:

6:30am Sunrise Service at the Dunedin Causeway - bring a towel, blanket ,or chairs.

9:00 or 10:45am Easter Service at Clearwater Community Church.

There will be no ABF classes this morning.

Children's classes will be available during the 10:45am service.

"He, the Life of all, our Lord and Savior, did not arrange the manner of his own death lest He should seem to be afraid of some other kind. No. He accepted and bore upon the cross a death inflicted by others, and those others His special enemies, a death which to them was supremely terrible and by no means to be faced; and He did this in order that, by destroying even this death, He might Himself be believed to be the Life, and the power of death be recognized as finally annulled. A marvelous and mighty paradox has thus occurred, for the death which they thought to inflict on Him as dishonor and disgrace has become the glorious monument to death's defeat."

St. Athanasius // *On the Incarnation*

AN EXHORTATION MAKING SPACE

To Speak of Dying

EVERY MOMENT HOLY, VOL. II: DEATH, GRIEF, & HOPE COPYRIGHT © 2020 DOUGLAS MCKELVEY

Children of the Living God,

Let us now speak of dying, and let us speak without fear,
for we have already died with Christ, and our lives are not our own.

Our dying is part of the story that God is telling to us,
and part of the story that God is telling through us.

It is not a dark and hopeless word we must take pains to skirt or mention only
in hushed whispers lest our conversations grow awkward and uncomfortable.

Rather, death is a present and unavoidable reality, and one through which
we—the people of God—must learn to openly walk with one another.

Yes, it is cause for lament. Death is a horrible and inevitable sorrow. It is grief.
It is numb shock and raw pain and long seasons of weeping and ache. And we
will experience it as such. But it is more than all of that.

For it is also a baptism, a prelude to a celebration.

Our true belief that Christ died and was raised again promises this great hope:

That there will be a newness of life, a magnificent resurrection that follows
death and swallows it entirely.

Death will not have the final word, so we need not fear to speak of it.

Death is not a period that ends a sentence. It is but a comma,
a brief pause before the fuller thought unfolds into eternal life.

Beloved of Christ, do not hide from this truth:

Each of us in time must wrestle death.

In our youth we might have run in fear from such lament, but only those who
soberly consider their mortal end can then work backward from their certain
death, and so begin to build a life invested in eternal things. We should
remember death throughout our lives, that we might arrive at last well-
prepared to follow our Lord into that valley, and through it, further still, to our
resurrection.

Death is not the end of life.

It is an intersection—a milestone we pass in our eternal pursuit of Christ.

Yes, death is an inhuman, hungering thing. But it is also the pompous
antagonist in a divine comedy. Even as it seeks to destroy
all that is good, death is proved a near-sighted buffoon whose overreaching
plans will fail, whose ephemeral kingdom will crumble.

For all along, death has been blindly serving the deeper purposes of God within us—giving us the knowledge that all we gather in this short life will soon be scattered, that all we covet will soon be lost to us, that all we accomplish by our ambition will soon be rendered as meaningless as vapor.

Death reveals the utter vanity of all our misplaced worship and all our feebly-invested hopes. And once we've seen, in light of death, how meaningless all our human strivings have been, then we can finally apprehend what the radical hope of a bodily resurrection means for mortals like us—and how the labors of Christ now reshape and reinterpret every facet of our lives, rebuilding the structures of our hopes till we know that nothing of eternal worth will ever be lost.

Yes, we are crucified with our Lord, but all who are baptized into his death are also resurrected into his life, so that we live now in the overlap of the kingdoms of temporal death and eternal life—and when it is our time to die, we die in that overlap as well, and there we will find that our dying has already been subverted, rewritten, folded in, and made a part of our resurrection. Have we not all along been rehearsing Christ's death and his life in the sacrament of his communion? We have been both remembering and rehearsing our union and reunion with him.

O children of God, do you now see? Your pursuit of Christ has always demanded a daily dying to your own self, and to your own dreams. That final, brief sleep of death is but the last laying down of all those lesser things, that you might awake remade, set free, rejoicing in the glorious freedom that will be yours. Yes, hate death!

It is an enemy—
but an enemy whose end approaches, and whose assault can inflict no lasting wound. Yes, weep and grieve! But more than that, believe!
The veil is thinner than we know. And death is thinner still.
It cannot hold any whose names are dearly known to God. Rejoice in this!
Death is neither a grey void, nor a dungeon cell—but a door.
And when Christ bids us pass through at last,
we pass from life to Life.
Amen.