

The Gospel News

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He is Risen



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Ye Are My Friends

By Elder Jim Lambert Jr.

Christ has so many different names in the scriptures. He's known as Emmanuel, our Everlasting Father, the Good Shepherd, the Messiah, the Lord God Almighty, the Prince of Peace. It says He's the resurrection and the life, that He's our Savior. The scripture tells us that He is a Wonderful Counselor to us and the King of Kings. The name that is so equally powerful, and maybe not considered enough, is the fact that He is our FRIEND.

In John 15:12 it says, "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you." As we read this, there must be some purpose behind our choice to serve God. We are searching and looking to strengthen the hope we have. We are looking to strengthen our relationship with Jesus Christ. When we consider the purpose of His existence, we must recognize the sincerity behind what He is saying.

It continues, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:13-16).

Christ has embraced everything His Father gave Him. He knew the importance of the love He was given and He knew how important it was to give that love. He knew how it felt and He wanted that for everybody.

In this portion of scripture, it says plainly... "Ye are my friends and I have chosen you." Think about that. Knowing what we know. Knowing that He knows all things. Knowing me, why would He choose me? Just focus on this idea. Christ wants us. Christ chose us. He chose us to be a friend with him. As it says in verse 15, "I call you not servants." That's not what it was about. Look at His life! From the very beginning He wasn't about calling people to come and serve Him. It was the absolute opposite. How is He our friend? How does He do it? How does He show it? What are these attributes? Who is He to us?

Attributes of the ultimate friend:

Christ is loyal	Protective	He was dependable	Forgiving	Nurturing
He is brave	He was encouraging	He was oh, so faithful	Patient	Fair
He was humble	He was a great listener	He was kind	Generous	Caring
Honest	He was supportive	Loving	Accepting	Giving
Compassionate				

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April 2nd is Good Friday. In childhood, it was hard to understand why it was called "good". In adulthood, we rejoice in Christ's sacrifice.

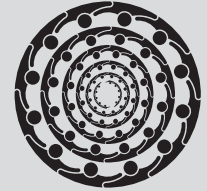


April 2nd is also National Peanut Butter & Jelly Day; to remind us that it just gets sweeter every day.

Hoping you can meet in your buildings on Easter Sunday, April 4th. If not, may you have a beautiful spirit in your zoom meeting.



Last April's GN grid asked us to remember the April conference, which was postponed, like this year. We have a great need to assemble.



April 25th is National Drug Take Back Day. Take any expired Rx's to a local pharmacy to dispose of properly and to avoid drug misuse.

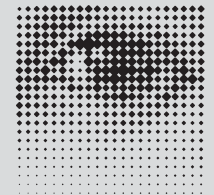


Do this little trick to brighten someone's day. If you see a flower, snap a picture of it and send it with a text, "Spring is here!"

III Nephi 10:10 will lift your spirit. (a God's Double)



In light of the Resurrection, God's Word can surely bless our hearts! Study III Nephi 10 & 11 as together they are most reassuring.



BFTP Blast From The Past

By Sister Kellie Speck

In 1970, fifty-one Easters ago, this Easter message: Blessed Hope by Brother Dominic Moraco, appeared in the Gospel News. The coming of Easter and the memory of the death and resurrection undergone for all mankind renews in all true followers of Christ the blessed hope of heavenly eternal life promised through the sacrifice made by our Savior. Understanding that the grave is only a bed for the body that will awaken again in the glorious springtime of the resurrection, therefore, is indeed a heartwarming thought for those who live Godly. For them, this thought makes every day worth living, because, to the true Christians Easter is present every day of the year. In greeting the spring with her promise of a warm and glorious summer to follow, may we likewise continually possess the hope that the wintry-like grave is not our final resting-place but that it is only the place for a night of slumber. Indeed, to the redeemed, the grave is only a temporary accommodation from which we shall arise and emerge into that blessed land above. It is there where we shall live eternally with Christ, who was the first fruit of the Resurrection. The warmth of The Gospel of Christ is all we need to live Easter every day.

Source: March 1970 Gospel News



Purpose Statement

- To fulfill the plan of God by bringing salvation through Christ to all people.

Mission Statement

- The Church of Jesus Christ will teach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things commanded by Jesus Christ, while working to draw Israel to Christ through efforts focused on the indigenous peoples of North, Central, and South America



Vision Statement

- Living and worshipping in unity and righteousness will result in the fullness of God's Spirit and power among the Saints, culminating in continuous growth of the Church and fulfillment of Christ's promises concerning His Kingdom on Earth.



“Don’t Stop Rising Up”

By Elder Doug Obradovich

“Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (John 20:17)

Mary Magdalene delivered sobering news to Peter and John that Jesus’ body had been moved from the sepulcher (she guessed the soldiers must have removed it). The two disciples headed to the tomb and found her report accurate, believing her once they viewed the empty grave (“And he saw, and believed” - John 20:8). They left to return home, while Mary stood just outside weeping. She was soon dialoguing with Jesus unawares (she thought Him to be a gardener and asked where He had lain the body of her Savior). He answered simply, “Mary” and hearing Him say her name, she knew instantly.

She turned to Him, possibly on the verge of running into His arms, because we read that He quickly said, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father.” He was not done resurrecting! He had already arisen from the dead, standing upright and breathing again, but He was not finished resurrecting! He had the greater distance to travel still, because He had to “ascend to my Father.”

Not unlike any one of us: We are not yet

ascended to the Father. Yes, if you have committed yourself to Christ, gone into the waters of baptism, and found salvation, you have undoubtedly raised yourself from some low point in your life. You have arisen from sinner to saint. You have elevated yourself from a fallen state to one of a glorious standing before God. But you have not yet ascended to the Father.

We are each intended for greater places than wherever we are today. We are all meant to continue rising. In that spectacular moment when our heads emerged out of the waters of baptism, we may have experienced nearly perfect purity, feeling closer to God than ever before. We may even have felt ready to meet God. But we were just beginning to arise. In the normal spiritual journey, baptism is everything that I have described, but at that point, we were not yet ascended to the Father. We had (and have) much further to go, and much more life to experience. These life experiences include multiple low points, which may involve disappointments and discouragements, all of which create

opportunities to shine Jesus Christ.

We are called to arise from these events, whether they involve death of loved ones, destitution, or defeat. Momentum = mass x velocity, but upward momentum must also factor in gravity. So stopping momentum, or pausing while arising, results in falling back or sinking lower, which is not God’s intended direction for us. Once Jesus Christ climbed up from the slab, shedding the three-day-old death linens behind in the sepulcher, He maintained upward momentum. Just as He stated to Mary, He was still on the move: “I have not yet ascended to my Father.”

Just as you are only beginning your own upward momentum. The resurrection power of Jesus Christ doesn’t only take place after death; it begins its claim on you immediately as you burst up and out of the waters of baptism. But you aren’t finished there; in fact, you are only just beginning. So, please, don’t stop rising up, because you have not yet ascended to your Father!

Happy Easter, early risers!

Five Supporting Characters of the Easter Story You May Be Forgetting

By Sister Cindy Henderson

When we think of the leading men and women who played main roles in the story of Jesus' crucifixion we think of Jesus Christ, Pilate, Mary, Mary Magdalene, and others, but have more difficulty recalling the individuals who played under-recognized parts in the Easter Story but still performed significant roles.

1. Simon of Cyrene

The first four Gospels mention Simon as the man who carried Jesus' cross to Golgotha outside the city center. (Matthew 27:31-33, Mark 15:20-22, Luke 23:26, John 19:16-17)

Golgotha may refer to the skull shaped hill or the many skulls that lay upon the ground at the site where so many were hung upon a cross. Criminals were required to carry their own crosses outside the city, but Jesus probably appeared too weak from his brutal lashings to carry it, so Simon was summoned from the crowd by the Roman soldiers to bear it for Him. It was not an easy task to walk while carrying one's cross. No doubt it was made of a strong, heavy wood that could bear the weight of the accused and withstand iron nails being repeatedly driven into it.

Simon, who had come from Cyrene, a city in modern-day Libya of North Africa, is thought to have come to worship in Jerusalem for the Passover. Cyrene is approximately 783 miles from Jerusalem, which would be a 32-day journey if you walked 4 miles per hour over 8-hour days.

Mark 15:21 records that Simon had brought his sons, Alexander and Rufus, to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Because people from Cyrene were some of the first to place their faith in the resurrected Christ on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10), many scholars believe that Simon, his sons, and even his wife may have been among those early church members.

We find another possible connection in Romans 16:3, where the Apostle Paul wrote, "Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well."

Considering that Simon probably lifted the

blood-splattered cross from Jesus' body onto his own, witnessed the crucifixion, and heard the news of His miraculous resurrection, it's easy to understand why scholars believe Simon may have become a follower of Christ.

In that day, it was extremely important to adhere to the law, and men were required to participate in the annual feasts; the Passover being one of three held at the sanctuary. Simon, who may have been ceremonially clean for this event, was now covered in blood, having borne Jesus' cross, and no longer a candidate fit for the Passover.

2. The Centurion at Jesus' Tomb

Little is known about this minor character, who is unnamed. In ancient Rome, a centurion was a 'captain of 100'. As a law enforcement officer and man of power, he would have seen the lowest of society and also rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous.

We learn that he was responsible for keeping watch over Jesus' tomb in Matthew 27:36. He likely would have already witnessed the crucifixion and later seen and felt the earth quake at the time of Christ's resurrection. During all that time that had passed, how many comments had the centurion heard that mocked Christ?

Mark 15:39 describes how the Centurion weighed the charges against Christ and the evidence of His character when He responded, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

In Luke 23:34-35, the Centurion could hear Christ's compassion after witnessing the rulers who derided Him. "Let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God."

Soldiers offered him vinegar, "If thou be the king of Jews, save thyself."

Later in the same chapter, in verses 43-47, this pagan soldier recognized what others refused to see. He saw Christ's humanity when He cried out on the cross, His agony when He asked why God had forsaken Him, and Christ's compassion for all of mankind when He asked His heavenly Father to forgive them. The Centurion, a formal instrument of Roman justice and punishment,

stated, "Certainly, this was a righteous man."

3. The Apostle John

Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, a place where He and His disciples had frequently been together. We know that Judas, along with soldiers and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, approached with swords and staves. Where were all His disciples now? Gospel accounts tell us that Peter and 'another disciple' followed Him into the high priest's courtyard (John 18). Some Bible scholars suspect this 'other disciple' was John. In the gospels, John is often referred to as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved'. Was this the same John who had leaned upon Christ's bosom after the feet washing service? The Bible also lists John as the only disciple present at Jesus' crucifixion.

While the others may have hid in fear of arrest, John bravely stood beside Jesus' mother as she witnessed her beloved son die (John 19:26). Jesus spoke to them from the cross, "Woman, here is your son." "Here is your mother," he spoke to John. John 19:27 reveals, "from that time on this disciple took her into his home." John accepted the responsibility for Mary's care, and she was reassured by her Son that after His crucifixion, John would be her caregiver.

John was demonstrating an **unfailing, true love** to put another person's welfare above his own. John's courage may have been lacking in the Garden of Gethsemane, but his **deep and abiding love for Jesus** ultimately caused him to do the right thing and step up to provide for Mary for the rest of her life.

4. Joseph of Arimathea

Joseph, like Nicodemus in John 3, was often referred to as a secret disciple. He was a member of the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish governing body in Christ's time.

Even though he was a respected member of this wealthy, judicial council (Mark 15:43-46), Joseph 'had not consented to their decision and action' to arrest and prosecute Jesus (Luke 23:50-55). In these few short verses several character traits are

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A Living Messiah

By Evangelist Mark Kovacic

I am probably like most people, in that occasionally I come across a quotable statement that really seems to convey exactly how I feel. I recently came across one of those. The statement is: "Faith in a dead messiah is no faith at all." [1] Let me explain.

In the Old Testament there is the account of the Prophet Elijah challenging (by himself) 450 priests of the pagan god Baal at Mount Carmel to see which god would take the sacrifice. There may also have been thousands of Israelites present. Two sacrifices were prepared. Everything was placed on the sacrifices except the fire. On Elijah's sacrifice they also added multiple barrels of water.

The priests called on Baal for hours, but with no results. Elijah even teased them that maybe their god was on a journey or was sleeping. The priests took the drastic measure of cutting themselves—but still no results.

Then Elijah called upon the LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, saying, "let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel." Then he offered a short prayer and immediately the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifices, the wood and the stones, the bullock, the dust, and even the water. When the Israelites saw this great miracle they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD [Adonai] he is the God" (1 Kings 18). What prompted them to do this act of humility? Their recognition of their God being alive, Who hears prayers and performs miracles!

Moses warned the people that the day would come when Israel would worship idols made by their own hands, "which cannot see, nor hear, nor eat or smell." Let me ask, who would want to serve a god who cannot do these things? Or worship a god that cannot perform miracles? When discussing the dead and afterlife with the Sadducees, Jesus pointed out to them, "have ye not read in the book of Moses, how in the bush God spake unto him, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' He is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living." (Mark 12:25-27)

Similarly, our Messiah, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is alive! He is as much alive now as ever! The Apostle Paul told the Corinthians that if there is no resurrection, then Jesus of Nazareth did not resurrect, which means Paul and the other Apostles preach in vain and the Saints' faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-15). Paul took the time to explain to the Corinthians that after Jesus' resurrection, He was seen by the apostles and at one time a group of over 500 people.

While in Jerusalem, not many days after the crucifixion, the apostles went to the Temple and preached about Jesus. They were arrested and thrown into prison, not because they preached about a dead man, but because they preached "the God of our Fathers raised up Jesus." (Acts 5:30)

They believed in a risen Savior. We believe in a risen Savior, One who hears and performs miracles. One who is our Master, Friend, and Advocate. Our Messiah is not dead but alive! We have faith in a living Messiah.

*They believed in a
risen Savior.
We believe in
a risen Savior...*

The First Resurrection (Mosiah 15)

By Brother Jerry Valenti

Originally published on the Gospel Blog, August 9, 2017. Sign up and get every new blog post sent straight to your inbox so you always have the day's devotional at your fingertips. Go to thechurchofjesuschrist.org/media/blog

As the prophet Abinadi continues his message to King Noah and his priests in Mosiah 15, he describes the concept of a “resurrection,” an event during which people who have died are “raised to dwell with God” (verse 23).

This brief description helps us to understand that a resurrection is not an event when a person is restored to life on earth but is something very different.

For example, the Church recently experienced a girl who was brain dead being restored to life — a wonderful miracle but not a resurrection. John 11 records that Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead after he was in the tomb for four days — a magnificent display of the power of Jesus but not a resurrection. In these two examples, the person was restored to life on earth; they will/would later die and then experience a resurrection.

None of us who is living has experienced a resurrection firsthand, but from the descriptions in the scriptures, we know that it consists of our soul awakening after death and being united with a spiritual body that will dwell in the kingdom of God for all eternity.

Sometimes, we like to imagine that our loved ones who have departed have already resurrected and are dwelling in the kingdom of God. Although this is a nice thought that brings us comfort at a difficult time, the scriptures actually indicate that there are only certain times designated for resurrections to occur. At those designated times, all of the righteous who have not yet resurrected will do so.

In this chapter, Abinadi describes the first



designated time when resurrections would occur, an occasion fittingly referred to as the “First Resurrection”:

“And there cometh a resurrection, even a first resurrection; yea, even a resurrection of those that have been, and who are, and who shall be, even until the resurrection of Christ” (Mosiah 15:21)

Until the resurrection of Christ — which was still in the future when Abinadi was speaking — nobody in history had resurrected, not the prophets nor any of the spiritual giants of the scriptures who died before Christ. But, once Jesus resurrected, the bands of death were broken, and all of the righteous resurrected immediately after Him. In order to illustrate what had occurred, God allowed many of these newly resurrected people to be seen on the streets of Jerusalem:

“And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many” (Matthew 27:52-53)

Of course, there will be future resurrections, one of which will include all of us. Many

believe there will be only one more resurrection for the righteous, but it’s also possible that there will be more than one. In truth, it doesn’t really matter. As Alma says:

“Now, whether there shall be one time, or a second time, or a third time, that men shall come forth from the dead, it mattereth not; for God knoweth all these things; and it sufficeth me to know that this is the case — that there is a time appointed that all shall rise from the dead.” (Alma 40:5)

The first resurrection from now — not to be confused with the actual first resurrection described above — is described in some detail in Revelation 20. This is the one we all look forward to, when we shall meet Jesus and be reunited with our loved ones who have gone on before us. Since we will all rise at the same time, we will be able to share with our loved ones the joy, the glory, the wonder, and the majesty associated with the resurrection and inheriting our heavenly home.

We thank God that Jesus Christ resurrected from the dead (the first resurrection) which has paved the way for all of us to resurrect in the future and dwell with God for all time.

Answers from last month

"He Arose, He Arose, Hallelujah Christ Arose!"

What does Jesus' resurrection mean to you personally?

"His love towards me and the precious gift of salvation He has offered to me." – *Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ Branch*

"It means there is hope! All will die but not all will experience the second death. This is because of Jesus and His atoning death for all who have trusted their lives to Him." – *Sister Nancy Plahovinsak, Edison, NJ Branch*

"Love, power, victory, life eternal, peace, joy, and hope!" – *Sister Rosanne Champine, Detroit, MI Branch #1*

What traditions do/did you have with your family for Easter?

"Everyone related to the Ritz family gathered in the Florida Keys at the home of David Ritz, grandson of the late Brother Nick and Sister Pauline Ritz. I don't know what we will do on Resurrection Day 2021, but I enjoy these memories." – *Brother George Katsaras, Hollywood, FL Branch*

"We used to gather together at my grandmother's house every Easter Sunday after church." – *Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ Branch*

"Homemade ravioli for dinner and an Easter egg hunt for the kids." – *Sister Juliette Coppa, Monongahela, PA Branch*

What part of the resurrection story do you find most moving/interesting?

"Mary Magdalene and other women found the empty tomb—it is such an amazing and important discovery, and God allowed them to be the ones to make it! They were in the right place at the right time, and God used them to make history!" – *Sister Christine Martorana, Lake Worth, FL Branch*

"All of the parts immediately following Jesus Christ's actual resurrection, including the stone being moved, the empty tomb, and all of the other events of the resurrection story are all exciting and interesting." – *Brother George Katsaras, Hollywood, FL Branch*

"I really like the part when Jesus said to the thief on the cross that he would be in paradise with him." – *Brother Michael Zaino, Edison, NJ Branch*

"As we look at our turbulent world, only the power of the resurrection can guarantee peace to our torn and chaotic world. This is the significance of the resurrection. It is the greatest event in human life and without it, there is no salvation, victory over sin, and no eternal life." – *Sister Nancy Plahovinsak, Edison, NJ Branch*

"I am most profoundly affected by Christ's words, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.' Christ could only have spoken those words to those who crucified Him through the divine Love of God, and that's the love I need to be filled with through prayer." – *Sister Rosanne Champine, Detroit, MI Branch #1*

"When he forgives the other man on the cross." – *Sister Juliette Coppa, Monongahela, PA Branch*

"I love the image of the veil in the temple being rent in two. There was no longer anything to separate us from having a personal relationship with God. Where before our sin kept us out, Jesus' sacrifice allowed us in." – *Sister Kim Komjathy, Detroit, MI Branch #1*

Journal Prompts to Help Us Apply Jesus' Resurrection to Our Lives Today

By Sister Christine Martorana

It is perhaps an obvious statement that Jesus' resurrection happened way before you or I were born. Still, we are familiar with the Easter story, perhaps reading it every year around this time and reflecting on what it must have been like for all of those involved: the criminal hanging next to Jesus, Mary Magdalene, the disciples, Pontius Pilate. I cannot even begin to imagine what each of these people felt as the events of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection took place.

However, what I can imagine is how I feel—the ways in which Jesus' life and death connect to my own life. And so, as we celebrate Easter this year, I invite you to consider how the different parts of the Easter story can apply to your individual life. The scriptures and corresponding journal prompts below are designed to help you do just that.

Scripture: "And [the criminal] said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)

- Journal prompt: Jesus extended grace to this man, forgiving him of his transgressions and ensuring him a place in paradise. What is one time in which you have experienced Jesus' grace in your own life? How were your feelings, thoughts, and/or behaviors changed after receiving this grace from on high?

Scripture: "And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulcher, and how His body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment." (Luke 23: 55-56)

- Journal prompt: The women in this scripture practiced unwavering faith and patience in the face of great sorrow. What is one time in which you were required to show great faith and/or patience despite sad or uncertain circumstances? How did you react to this situation? Were you able to exercise the necessary faith and patience?

Scripture: "Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulcher, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulcher. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus." (Luke 24: 1-3)

- Journal prompt: The stone had been placed at the sepulcher entrance to ensure that no one could get in or out. Jesus did not need to physically remove the stone in order to leave the tomb; however, when the women arrived at the sepulcher, they found the stone was rolled away—perhaps this was a symbolic movement on the Lord's part to show that man's greatest efforts are no match for Jesus' power. Are there stones in your life that need to be rolled away in order for Jesus to reveal His power? How long have these stones (e.g., situations, habits, people) been there, blocking Jesus' greatness in your life, and what can you do to roll the stones away?

Gifts *By Sister Linda Zane*

When a gift is given...

- ...do we need to repay?
- ...or simply accept graciously?

God's grace and salvation are gifts that are given to the human family...

- ...do we need to repay God for these gifts?
- ...or simply accept them graciously?

Do we view our good works and deeds as a form of repayment to God?

Or, are they simply God's Love and Spirit working within and through us?

We must be so completely filled with the Spirit of God that we have accepted God's grace...

- ...and consequently, His works are performed by and through us as fruit...
- ...not as working or giving due to a sense of requirement or repayment to God.

When we receive blessings from God, therefore, is it because we have worked for them?

Or, does He give freely out of His AGAPE Love for us?

Our works should not be done out of a selfish need to receive of God's blessings...

- ...but out of our pure love for God.
- And, God blesses us in return...
- ...not for what we do...
- ...but because we are His children, and He LOVES us unconditionally.

GOD LOVES simply because HE IS LOVE.

Service to God (in all of its forms) can be out of a feeling of...

...REPAYMENT (stems from a feeling of owing—leads to the feeling of being forced to do things for God—which leads to a LACK OF JOY)

VS.

...PURE LOVE (stems from an understanding of God's unconditional love, as well as from allowing His Spirit to work in and through us—leads to the feeling of love for all things Godly and for all others—which leads to PURE JOY.)

If we fully understood the LOVE OF GOD, which is expressed through His GIFTS and BLESSINGS, we would fully understand our proper RESPONSE to that LOVE.

For God's greatest gift to the Human Family was the gift of His Son...

- ...a gift that was given out of God's pure love for us,
- ...and which must be accepted graciously by us,
- ...and for which we can never repay!

The Crucifixion of Jesus By Apostle Jerry Valenti

Although we think about this often, we especially take time at this season of the year to remember how Jesus Christ was crucified to atone for our sins and make a way for each of us to be able to receive eternal salvation in the kingdom of God. Here are 5 amazing facts regarding the crucifixion to provide additional insight and hopefully even additional appreciation for what Jesus did for us.

1 Humiliated – It's bad enough to suffer a painful death but it's even worse to be humiliated in the process. The soldiers took Jesus' clothes (John 19:23) and then nailed Him to the cross for all to look at (Matthew 27:35-36). As the people looked at Him, they mocked Him, saying, "Let him save himself, if he be Christ" (Luke 23:35). What was His reaction to all of this? For our sakes, He bore the humiliation willingly and said, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

2 Struggled for Breath – When someone was hanging by his arms on a cross, his internal organs would press against his lungs, making breathing difficult or impossible – the person had to push up with his feet to make room for the lungs to expand. When the soldiers decided it was time for the condemned person to die, they would break

his legs such that he could no longer push up and breathe. The soldiers broke the legs of the two thieves next to Jesus, but they didn't need to break Jesus' legs since He had already died (John 19:32-33), fulfilling a prophecy that none of His bones would be broken (Psalms 34:20; John 19:36).

3 Spilled His Blood – To make sure that Jesus was dead, one of the soldiers thrust a spear into His side – blood and water came out (John 19:34). According to contemporary medical descriptions, water came out because Jesus had lost so much blood by that point. He spilled all of that blood for us.

4 Buried in Someone Else's Tomb – Since the crucifixion of Jesus occurred on a Friday, the Law of Moses dictated that the entire process needed to be concluded before

the Sabbath began at sundown. That's why the soldiers needed to hasten the deaths of the condemned men. When Jesus was dead, He also needed to be buried prior to sundown. He didn't own a tomb, but a disciple named Joseph of Arimathea donated one of his own tombs so Jesus would have a burial place (Luke 23:50-56). The location wasn't that critical – Jesus' body would only be there a short time anyway.

5 Yet, He Still Cared for Others – Even as Jesus hung on the cross, He gave salvation to one of the thieves hanging next to Him (Luke 23:39-43). He arranged for his earthly mother to be taken care of for the rest of her life (John 19:26-27). He asked forgiveness for those who were mocking Him (Luke 23:34). And of course, He stayed on the cross because of His love for us. He could have called for legions of angels to deliver Him (Matthew 26:53) but He hung there and died – for you and me.



Ladies' Uplift Circle News

Choices By Sister LuAnn Carson

Everyday we make choices. Some are simple choices like what to have for breakfast or what to wear. Other choices might be more difficult to make and may impact our lives more, such as who to marry or what career path to take.

My father used to play music in the house most of the time. One of my favorite songs that he played contained the words, "He could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free." The song was inspired by the scripture we read in Matthew 26:53-54, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

(Continued on page 11)

*He could have called
ten thousand angels*

*To destroy the world
and set Him free*

*He could have called
ten thousand angels*

But He died alone for you and me





Easter- A Time For New Things

Dear Friends,

Have you ever thought about what we are made up of? We have a physical side and our bodies often heal themselves. We grow and can often exercise to change muscles. We also must eat and sleep, and we get older!

... We have a mental side. We can watch and read, study and learn so many interesting things.

We have an emotional side. Babies need love to want to live. We can feel other people's pain and joys!... And best of all—and sometimes others do not realize this huge secret to success—we have a spiritual side as well.

How do you get it stronger and more powerful? We pray and thank God for all He does!

When we pray to God the Creator of the world, He hears us! He sent His son, Jesus, down to Earth to be in a human body, so Jesus truly knows everything we are going through. And if you have God on your side, you can say a prayer and get through hard times. You can get blessing after blessing and many successes because you know to ask in the name of Jesus! And after He helps you then praise Him, tell others, and say thanks!

When Jesus was on this earth as a man, ten men with the horrible disease of leprosy came towards Him. (See Luke 17:11-17.) With this dread disease, your body gets terrible sores all over. You lose feelings and injure fingers, toes, even a nose! You are not allowed to stay with your family in case they get sick too. And people were horribly afraid of the sick ones.

You know what it feels like during this COVID virus in 2021 when you must stay away from playing with or touching or hugging others? People with this disease are forced to stay

away from everyone who is well.

So Jesus was walking and a group of ten men with leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and shouted at him "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!"

When Jesus saw them, He said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." In those days, the priests at the Jewish temple served people by deciding who was unclean or sick. And as they went, they were healed!

One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him and praised God for healing him! And he was not a Jewish person, but was a Samaritan from a group who were not friends of Jews.


Jesus asked, "Weren't all ten men cleansed? Where are the other nine? They have not returned to give glory to God, only this stranger!" And Jesus, who was pleased the man had praised God, said unto him, "Arise, go your way: your faith has made you whole!"

It is so important to thank God for all He does for you each day. Do you have food? Can you walk? Does someone you can count on watch over you? Do you sleep under a safe roof at night? Has God had someone be nice and kind to you? We must thank God and Jesus for all they do for us. We cannot forget their goodness to us. When you were a little child you were taught to thank others for kind and helpful things they did for you. Today, do something new! Think about someone you can say thanks to and fill out your little bookmark. Remember, all good comes from God. And people need to know that their kindnesses make a difference to others.

Find someone kind to give your message to! Surprise them. Let them feel your happiness for what they do!

With much love, your friend, *Sister Jan*

For _____



Three things I love and appreciate about you.

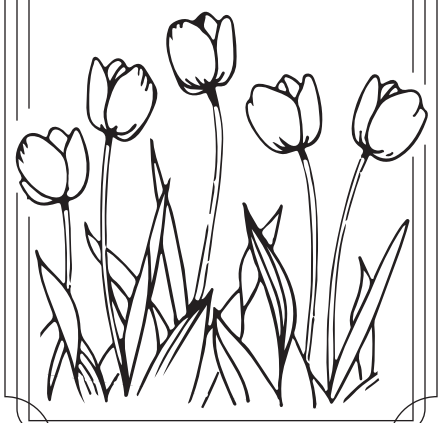
1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

You make a difference in this world. Thanks and God bless you.

From _____



Easter Story Continued from page 4

revealed. It took boldness and courage to approach Pilate and beg for Christ's body, and the same to risk the ridicule of his peers and possibly the loss of his wealth and position. He was an honorable man who craved the body of Christ and showed great respect when he bought fine linen and, along with Nicodemus, anointed it with burial spices. Linen was an expensive, pure cloth and spices were also costly. He was a determined man who formulated and carried out a plan to take Jesus' body from the cross and transport it to his own tomb. To carry and transport Christ's body would have required physical strength. Kindness, consideration, love, and generosity are further illustrated as Joseph offered his own burial place for Christ's body.

Some people may see him as a cowardly man who remained silent when the votes were cast to condemn Jesus. However, Joseph showed great courage after His death. He was a just and honorable counsellor who used his influence for good. He made a choice to step up and do the right thing in front of his peers, no matter what it cost him.

5. Pilate's Wife

Our list of noble, yet easily-forgotten characters ends with a person we know very little about. Unlike her well-known husband, she isn't even named in the Gospels. Since she was married to a prominent Roman governor, she was quite likely high-born, Roman, well-educated, and wealthy. But let's focus not so much on who she was, but rather what she did. On the morning of Jesus' trial, she warned her husband, "Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him" (Mat 27:19). While we never read of the exact dream's message, it is obvious Pilate's wife chose to follow God's Spirit. Wisdom and discernment were shown as she responded to the dream, pleading with an urgent message to spare an innocent man. She was used as a messenger of God to deliver a timely, urgent message.

It was a bold and courageous act on her part to confront a powerful man like Pilate. Pilate chose to disregard his wife's wise advice, even though scripture records that he 'knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him' (Mat 27:18).

In a world where women were devalued and females were powerless in their own right, she is considered heroic, as she is the only person recorded who spoke up against the decision to kill Jesus.

Do we always need to be the main character? We may never hold a starring role in this life. Perhaps I am the supporting actor/actress or behind-the-scenes person making only a cameo appearance on this stage of life. As a sister, brother, man, woman or child, Heavenly Father, please show us how to be a bold, courageous, faithful disciple who loves You and others enough to serve You well.

Choices Continued from page 9

Jesus was born into this world with human feelings, human sensitivities, and the ability to experience pain. He too had choices to make. He was not forced to go to the cross. He was not forced to suffer. It was His choice—made because of His love for us. Jesus knew the suffering and pain that was ahead. He could have called legions of angels. Jesus could have made the choice to free Himself from His future humiliation and pain. But He knew that the scripture had to be fulfilled through His suffering and death. He loved us so much that He chose to die. His love for us drove His incredibly difficult decision.

I pray that I will be forever grateful for the choice He made that day. In return for His sacrifice, I hope my heart chooses Jesus over the world. Romans 12:1-2 reminds us to make Jesus our choice. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." That's the greatest and most important choice we can ever make.

Ye Are My Friends Continued from cover

He makes the plea to us through the scriptures. Whatever you need, whatever it is, place it on My shoulders. I will provide it. Whatever is important to you. You are My friend and I love you that much. Completely sacrificial. He gave it all, literally. While He was walking to the cross, He gave it all. Everything. To show them how much of a friend He was. How wonderful He was, and we have the beautiful opportunity to experience His love and friendship.

It is striking when you drive into the full meaning of a friendship and consider what a wonderful friend Jesus is to us. How can I possibly be the friend He is to me, to Him? If I were to ask him how I could be a better friend to Him, I think He would say, "It's not about me. But I've told you, if you want to be a friend to Me, be a friend to everyone else. Be the friend I am to you to everyone else. Share the love that I have given to you with them." I'm pretty sure that's what He would say, because He has already said it in the scripture.

We have this hope that the world is going to be a better place. But that doesn't just happen. We can't count on it just happening; we need to play a role in it. Find the friendless and make them your friends. Become the shining example that Christ was. He knows everything about us and still calls us His friend. He knows we will fail Him, He knows we will disappoint Him, but He still calls us His friend. Think about the people He called His friends. Look at the friendship He had. Look at Judas. He was his friend even though He knew what Judas was about to do. But yet, in spite of that, Christ focused on their friendship. He knows what He is going to get out of me. He already does. In spite of who I am, He loves me. He chose me.

Rely upon the friendship we have with Jesus Christ. You know the saying, "It's good to have friends in high places?" We have that. We have a Friend in the highest place. It's not what you know, it's Who you know. Knowing the love He has for me, it is critical for me to feel it. Develop that relationship with God. The more we do it, the more we will feel from Him. Connect with Him. Pour your heart out to Him and you will feel the love and friendship He has for us.

Blessing Bits

BB HE TAKES CARE OF US

One morning, we saw several inches of snow in Cincinnati, but I still planned to head into work. As I put the keys in my car, the engine wouldn't start. Overwhelmed at first with the notion that I couldn't get to work, I realized I was fortunate to be able to work from home when needed, and this obviously was a need! After the frustration wore off from dealing with a car that wouldn't start, I stopped to thank the Lord. My car was safe in our garage, and I was safe inside our cozy home. I wasn't stranded in a parking lot in the middle of a snowstorm, or even in the middle of traffic. Things could have been so much worse! I'm thankful for this little reminder that He tossed my way...to know that He takes care of us even when we don't always realize it. – *Sister Natalie Shawver, Cincinnati.Morrow, OH Mission*

BB ALL HONOR AND GLORY TO HIM

While vacuuming, all the electricity went off in the living room. I thought that perhaps just a fuse had tripped, so I checked the fuse box but there was still no electricity in the living room. I got an electrician right away to check

the outlets. The one behind the loveseat was all charred, burned all the way through from one side of the plug to the other. I told him I had not smelled anything burning at all in that room. As I looked at the burnt outlet, I began to think of all the things that could have happened. There could have been a fire behind the loveseat, burning through into the kitchen, or a fire at night and because of the placement of the outlet, the entire house could have been engulfed in flames. All honor and glory to God! **For the full experience, check out the Blog @ thechurchofjesuschrist.org/media/blog in May.** – *Sandy Brown, Deramus, Columbus, OH Branch*

BB HE HEARS OUR PRAYERS

Like many of you, I start the day in prayer. I pray for my family and those in need of God's touch. I thank God for His love, His protection, His provisions and sovereignty overall. I drive my youngest son to school and then go about my day. One day, I had to make a left-hand turn onto what I thought was just a two-lane one-way road but was actually one lane in each direction. As I passed the first lane there

was a van racing towards me and I missed it by just seconds—enough time to see my life flash before me! As soon as I could, I stopped to catch my breath and thank God for His protection. I then thought of the many times He has protected me (seen or unseen), and my heart was filled with gratitude. He truly hears our prayers! (See Psalm 27:5-6 KJV) – *Sister Heylen Griffith, Forest Hills, FL Branch*

Send us your Blessing Bits by contacting Sister Zarella Scolaro at zarellamosqueda@gmail.com [in approximately 150 words].
Answers to Question of the Month to gospelnews@thechurchofjesuschrist.org.



Question for this month: What did you take for granted the most before COVID that you plan to enjoy or treasure more when the pandemic is finally behind us?



Answer from last month: There are three questions about Easter this month: What does the resurrection mean to you personally? What traditions do/did you have with your family for Easter? What part of the resurrection story do you find most moving/interesting?

Turn back to page 7 for answers to this question.



...count it all joy when ye fall in divers temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. James 1:2,3