

LIVING THE WORD—Week 12 (Sun., April 12 – Sat., Apr. 18)

The God of the Mighty Acts: the Great Story of God's Relentless Love

Easter (Part 2)—God Raises Jesus from the Dead

John 11:25-26; 1 Corinthians 15:1-8; Ephesians 2:4-10

Key Verse: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve." (1 Corinthians 15:3-5)

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the climax of the entire story of God and his people and he greatest of all God's mighty acts. Last week we considered the cross and spent some meditating on its call in our lives. This week we will look at the empty tomb, and at the life and hope it offers.

Paul summarizes the gospel in four simple points: Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). This gospel, he says, is what saves us; and so he passed it on as the subject of first importance. It is essential that we clearly understand the gospel and that we too pass it on as of first importance.

Just as God was known in the Old Testament through the mighty act of delivering Israel from Egypt, so in the New Testament God is proclaimed as the one who raised Jesus from the dead (Acts 2:24,32; 3:15; 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30-37; 17:31; Romans 4:24; 8:11; 10:9; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:10; 1 Peter 1:21). The resurrection of Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel (Acts 13:32). It is the assurance that God has appointed Jesus to one day judge the world (Acts 17:31). If we believe in it, we are justified and saved (Romans 4:14; 10:9); and without it, we would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). It is our confidence that God's Spirit can give us new life now (Romans 8:11), and it is our hope in the face of death (1 Thess. 4:13-14).

Resurrection not only defines Jesus (he is "the resurrection and the life"), it also defines our own lives. We were dead in our sin, but God made us alive in Christ and raised us up with him (Ephesians 2:4-6). Because we are raised with him, we should set our minds where he is and put to death whatever in us is worldly (Colossians 3:1-11). God's incomparable power that raised Jesus is at work in us who believe (Ephesians 1:18-20).

Next Week: Pentecost—Part 1 (John 13:34-35; 17:20-23; Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 2:19-22; 4:1-16; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 3:12-17; Hebrews 10:19-25)

Memory Verse (for Weeks 9-12): John 3:16

On the Mountain ("Love God"—set aside 30 minutes this week for quiet time with God)

1. Find a time when you can sit alone and uninterrupted. Spend a few moments preparing your heart to meditate on your relationship with God.
2. Read Colossians 3:1-11. Meditate on Christ, who is seated at the right hand of God.
3. Reflect on what it means that your life is hidden with Christ in God.
4. Consider what worldly things still need to be put to death in you. Pray that God will help you rid your life of these things.

In the Gathering (“*Love Each Other*”—discuss with your home church or small group)

1. Compare Paul’s description of God in Ephesians 2:4-7 with God’s description of himself in Exodus 34:7. What similarities do you see?
2. What similarities and differences are there between Lazarus’ and Jesus’ resurrections? Which one is most like the resurrection Jesus promises those who believe in him?
3. Why do you think New Testament preaching about Jesus’ resurrection places so much emphasis on his appearances to witnesses?
4. Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, then our faith is useless, believers who have died have ceased to exist, and we are to be pitied (1 Corinthians 15:12-19). Why do you think that is true?
5. If we are raised with Christ, what does that life look like? (Colossians 3:1-17)
6. Do you have anything to share from your time with God, your family, or in the world?
7. If there is time, discuss the “In the World” section below.
8. Pray using the Lord’s Prayer as a guide. Pray especially that the kingdom would come in our lives and in the world.

Around the Table (“*Love Your Family*”—sit at home and talk together as a family)

1. When you think of Easter Sunday, what comes to mind first? (Easter bunnies & eggs, pretty dresses and flowers, church services, Jesus’ resurrection, etc.) Why?
2. How are bunnies and eggs and flowers and springtime connected to the religious themes of Easter? (rebirth, new life, renewal, God’s power, etc.)
3. How can we put more emphasis on God and Jesus in our Easter season?

Into the World (“*Love the World*”—prayerfully consider God’s mission for us in his world)

1. Read Matthew 28:16-20. What does Jesus claim about himself, and how is that claim related to his resurrection?
2. What mission does Jesus give to his followers, and how is that mission related to his resurrection?
3. What promise does Jesus give to his followers, and how is that promise related to his resurrection? How is the promise related to their mission?