

**Devotions – March 15-21, 2015**

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**REFLECTIONS FROM THE CROSS**

**Sunday, March 15: FORGIVENESS**

Text: Luke 23:34

**“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”**

American hostages being be-headed. Coptic Christians being murdered in mass. Father, forgive them! The problem is, the Islamic terrorists do know what they are doing! Do you and I know what we are doing when we do or say hurtful and hateful things about each other? Father, forgive us! Most importantly, on the cross Jesus is providing forgiveness for all those who would ever believe in Him (Matthew 20:28). The cross didn't kill Jesus. The Romans didn't kill Jesus. The Sadducees and Pharisees didn't kill Jesus. Jesus willingly gave up His earthly life for the sins of His own (Ephesians 2:8-9). He paid the penalty for the sins that we commit in our ignorance and even the ones we commit deliberately. In forgiving us, Jesus fulfilled another Old Testament prophecy (Isaiah 53:12f). He also made a reality of His own teaching when He said, “Love your enemies” (Matthew 5:44); now He was proving it. To live in relationship with God and each other we must first acknowledge our need to be forgiven. When we come to Christ in faith and repentance as a result of His drawing us to Himself (John 6:44), He says of us, “Father, forgive them,” and He does!

Let us pray: Dear Lord as we journey to the Cross, help us to reflect to each other your unconditional love and forgiveness in all we do and say. Amen



**Monday, March 16: PARADISE**

Text: Luke 23:43

**“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”**

As Jesus was hanging on the cross, paying our penalty for sin, He made a promise to a dying, repentant thief. The thief's sins were washed away, and his death that day was his entrance to paradise. The word “paradise” literally means “garden” or “park.” In later Jewish thought, Paradise is the place of the righteous dead. When Jesus spoke to the thief on the cross, He promised him that he would that day be spiritually present with Him in Paradise.

Out of the gift of Baptism, you and I are made new each day to reflect Jesus promise that He is spiritually present with us as His church (the living body of Christ) present for all to behold.

Let us pray: Dear Lord as we journey to the Cross, help us to reflect the promise of Eternal life with you in all we do and say. Amen



## **Tuesday, March 17: CARING FOR EACH OTHER**

Text: John 19:26-27

**“When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, “Woman, here is your son.” Then he said to the disciple, “Here is your mother.”**

Even while hanging from the cross, Jesus was compassionately thinking of others. It is from the cross that Jesus preaches his most powerful sermon. His first three statements from the cross reveal His enormous and incredible love for others. He is thinking of others when He says, “Father forgive them...” Jesus’ focus is on the needs of the soldiers and crowds who were ridiculing him and not on his own pain. In the second statement, Jesus focuses on the thief on the cross when he says, “Today, you will be with me in paradise.” And the same quality of Love for another is found in the third statement when Jesus was concentrating on the needs of his mother and best friend. Jesus was telling the both of them: Take care of one another in the future when I am physically gone from you.

If we are to model Jesus, our first priority should be to care for one another before we become obsessed with our own needs. “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” – Galatians 6:2

Let us pray: Dear Lord, as we journey to the cross, help us each day to reflect your sacrificial Love and Grace in the ways in which we care for each other. Amen



## **Wednesday, March 18: FEELING FORSAKEN**

Text: Matthew 27:46

**“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”**

Jesus knew His mission on earth would take Him to the cross, since He told His disciples this would happen on a number of occasions. So, the cry did not imply bewilderment and was intended for the bystanders, many of whom failed to understand. Matthew, however, wanted the readers to see the deeper meaning.

While such a proclamation from someone who is both fully God and fully human may seem odd, Matthew’s gospel in particular emphasizes how the events of the crucifixion correlate with Psalm 22. Jesus presents the ultimate example of the innocent sufferer, which is the focus of that psalm. So, Jesus’ cry should be considered in the context of innocent suffering that looks forward to the day when “All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the Lord” (Psalms 22:27). In other words, Jesus takes the punishment so that others could be saved. Whenever you are feeling forsaken, remember that Jesus will help to see you through because He has been there and done that.

Let us pray: Dear Lord, as we journey to the cross, help us to reflect that all of our burdens are carried by you for our sake. We thank you that we will never be forsaken. Amen



**Thursday, March 19: THIRSTY ON THE CROSS**

Text: John 19:28b

**“...I am thirsty.”**

Jesus’ final act on earth was intended to win our trust. This is the final plea of a thirsty man. And through his thirst, through a sponge and a jar of cheap wine, he leaves a final appeal. “You can trust me.”

Jesus, lips cracked and mouth of cotton. Throat so dry he couldn’t swallow, and voice so hoarse he could scarcely speak. He is thirsty. To find the last time moisture touched his lips you need to rewind a dozen hours to the meal in the upper room. Since tasting that cup of wine, Jesus has been beaten, spat upon, bruised, and cut. He has been a cross-carrier and sin-bearer, and no liquid has soothed his throat. He is thirsty. So why did Jesus endure all of these feelings? Because he knew that we would feel them too. He knew you would be weary, disturbed, and angry. He knew you’d be sleepy, grief-stricken, and hungry. He knew you’d face pain. If not the pain of the body, the pain of the soul...pain too sharp for any drug. He knew you’d face thirst. If not a thirst for water, at least a thirst for truth, and the truth we glean from the image of a thirsty Christ who understands us. And because he understands, we can come to him.

“But whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.” – John 4:14

Let us pray: Dear Lord as we journey to the cross, help us to draw from you each day the water of life. Amen



**Friday, March 20: IT IS FINISHED**

Text: John 19:30a

**“It is finished.”**

“It is finished.” Found only in the Gospel of John, these words translate from the Greek to mean, “paid in full.” When Jesus uttered these words, He was declaring the debt owed to His Father was wiped away completely and forever. Not that Jesus wiped away any debt that He owed to the Father; rather, Jesus eliminated the debt owed by mankind—the debt of sin. Jesus’ finished work on the cross was the beginning of new life for all who were once “dead in trespasses and sins” but who are now made “alive with Christ” (Ephesians 2:1,5).

Let us pray: Dear Lord as we journey to the cross, help us to reflect that our debt of sin is paid in full. Amen



**Saturday, March 21: COMMITED**

Text: Luke 23:46b

**“Father, into your hands I commit My spirit.”**

Jesus final words express a complete dependence on God—his life is in God’ hands to do with as He pleases. Our relationship with God is that of children to a parent, sheep to a shepherd, created to the Creator. We are dependent on him for life, for breath, for sustenance, for help in trouble, for love, for forgiveness, for mercy. We may like to think of ourselves as independent and self-sufficient. But we are not. We need God. It is vital that we acknowledge our need for him because it is the beginning place of our relationship with him.

Let us pray: Dear Lord as we journey to the cross, help us moment by moment to reflect upon our dependence and need for your un-conditional love and grace each day. Amen

