



## 2024 HOLY WEEK DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

This year during Holy Week, we will observe Jesus as He journeys through His last Passover week. We will take a new look at selections from past Easter devotionals.

**As we consider these, we may ask ourselves questions such as**

- ... If I had been there, where might I have been in this story?
- ... How can I better follow Jesus's example?
- ... Can I love more outside of our church walls and church community, sharing His story, so others will come to know Him?



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

MARCH 24 - (Palm Sunday) .....	3
Janis Aston – Martha, Mary, and Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life	
MARCH 25 - (Monday).....	4
Bob Bunn– Celebrating Passover with His disciples, Jesus demonstrates His servant nature	
MARCH 26 - (Tuesday).....	5
Diana Chandler –Jesus, both Good Shepherd and Passover Lamb, paid for our sin	
MARCH 27 - (Wednesday) .....	6
Jason Cox – How deep God the Father’s love for us is as His only Son suffers and dies to save us	
MARCH 28 - (Thursday) .....	7
Bob Grammer – Jesus struggles in Gethsemane but is determined to follow God’s will	
MARCH 29 - (Good Friday) .....	8
Bob Bunn and Jimmy Hester – Jesus, hanging on the cross, dying, provides for His mother	
Bob Grammer - Grieving Our Loss .....	9
March 30- (Saturday).....	10
Alyssa and Steve Goins – Reflect quietly on the tomb where the body of Jesus lay in silent stillness, awaiting resurrection	
March 31 - (Easter Sunday) .....	11
Jerry Brown – The Apostle Paul reminds believers that we will be united with the resurrected Christ!	
New Creations! .....	12

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

*(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

MARCH 24

## Martha, Mary, and Jesus, the Life (Palm Sunday)

by Janis Aston (2021)

**Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." ...**

**"I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live ... ." (John 11:25)**

Who Is Jesus?

Grief ... the debilitating, agonizing, heart-wrenching feelings of losing someone. Martha, through her tears, asked Jesus, "Why, why didn't you come when we asked?" Her faith was deep, and she believed that Jesus could have, would have, healed Lazarus. If only He had come when she asked.

Can we read between the lines and see Jesus gently lifting Martha's chin, looking into her eyes with understanding and compassion, feeling her pain, and, even though knowing what He was about to do, saying, "I am the resurrection and the life. Do you believe?" He did not rebuke her for asking, "Why?" He experienced her grief with her, but in a loving and comforting way, He simply asked, "Do you know who I am?" And she answered, "Yes, Lord; I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

But she still did not fully comprehend that He is the resurrection and the life ... that He has power over death. And He is life. Believers know that through Him we have life, everlasting life.

The weight of everything that Jesus was facing — not only the immediate grief and sadness He shared with Martha and Mary, but also His crucifixion, the overwhelming grief and bewilderment that He knew His followers, closest friends, and family would encounter, the inability of humans to understand the enormity of His mission — culminated in verse 35: "Jesus wept."

Knowing we will see our loved ones in heaven is a promise we claim. But Jesus showed in this passage the comfort that He gives while we are waiting for that glorious day. He wraps His loving arms around us, and we can share our grief with Him. He is strong and can handle whatever questions we have. With gentleness, understanding, and compassion.

That's who our Jesus is.

### Think about:

- Who within our church community needs our friendship?
- Is there someone I know right now who could use a word of encouragement?
- When has God's timing been different than yours and what blessings have you seen from that?
- How can we love people in the midst of profound grief?

MARCH 25

## Community – Sharing the Good News (Monday)

by Bob Bunn (2015)

**Then He said to them, “I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.” (Luke 22:15)**

For centuries, Jews have celebrated Passover in the context of community. Family and friends gather together under one roof to share the story of the exodus from Egypt and the joy of fellowship.

The Bible tells us that this sense of community had not dissipated by Jesus’ day. He “fervently desired” to share His final Passover experience with the ones He loved so much—His disciples. During the Seder\*, He shared His heart and provided an incredible example of servanthood by washing their feet.

Still today we do not observe Easter in a vacuum. We share it with those around us including our immediate family and our church family. But the community we share should not remain only within the four walls of our church building. It should be driving us to make a difference in the lives of others by sharing the message Easter—the good news—with the world around us.

### Think About:

- Who are you sharing Easter with this year?
- With whom can you share the message of Easter in the days to come?
- Are there traditions you would like to create for your family’s Easter?



\* **Seder** - The Passover Seder is a ritual feast at the beginning of the Jewish holiday of Passover. It is conducted throughout the world on the eve of the 15th day of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. Seder customs include telling the Passover story, discussing the story, drinking four cups of wine, eating matzah, partaking of symbolic foods, and reclining in celebration of freedom. The Seder is among the most commonly celebrated Jewish rituals, performed by Jews all over the world. (Source: Wikipedia)

MARCH 26

## Jesus, the Good Shepherd (Tuesday)

by Diana Chandler (2021)

**I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:11)**

When performed correctly, shepherding is a noble, sacrificial, and often exhausting task. But there were shepherds in biblical times who were noticeably unfaithful.

When Reuel's daughters tried to water their flock in Exodus 2, selfish shepherds drove them away from the well, seeking to care for their own flocks unjustly at others' expense. Moses interceded triumphantly on the sisters' behalf.

In Ezekiel 34, God condemned shepherds for feeding themselves while neglecting their flocks. *"You eat the fat, wear the wool, and butcher the fattened animals, but you do not tend the flock."* (34:4) They didn't strengthen the weak, heal the sick, or bandage wounds. Evil shepherds did not search for lost sheep – one of their key duties. They loved themselves more than they loved the flocks that needed their guidance, and they had no compassion.

God promised to intervene. Just at the appointed time, Jesus, that good shepherd of the sheep, came to find the lost sheep and *"rescue them from all the places where they had been scattered on a day of clouds and total darkness"* (Ezekiel 34:12).

Jesus, our good shepherd, finds us when and where we are lost. He bandages us where we are battered and torn. He strengthens us when we are weak. And He loves and guides us with grace and mercy. At one of the lowest times in my own life, Jesus rocked me in the cradle of His arms.

Jesus, our good shepherd, so loves, guides, and cares for us that He endured an old, rugged cross, despised the shame, and stretched out His arms to guide us home to the sheepfold.

Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd." This Easter, follow Him to the sheepfold. Bow down and worship Him.

### Think About:

- How can we relate with compassion to people who need a friend?
- Unlike Jesus, we may not know why people are hurting before we help them. But we can be like Jesus and help.
- Think about the peace of a sheep trusting in its shepherd. How can you focus on that assurance of care during times of worry?
- Listen to "He Will Hold Me Fast" by Keith and Kristyn Getty at the following: <https://youtube/3OOphIgGkjM>



MARCH 27

## “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” (Wednesday)

by Jason Cox (2020)

**“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son,  
that whoever believes in him should not perish but  
have eternal life.” (John 3:16)**

There is something special about a father’s love.

When I think of my father, I think of his patience sitting at the kitchen table for hours trying his best to explain to me, a hard-headed ninth grader, the fundamentals of algebra. Or the way he sacrificed countless afternoons and weekends carrying my brother and me to music lessons, soccer practice, baseball games, and other gas-guzzling, time-consuming commitments.

On several occasions in Scripture we see the evidence of a father’s love. A prodigal son is welcomed home with open arms by his father. And Jairus, a desperate father, pleads with Jesus to come heal his 12-year-old daughter. Jairus’ love for his little girl compelled him to go and seek out the Healer.

And how about Jesus Himself? The Son of God sent on a mission of mercy by His own Father to come and dwell with us. What kind of love is this?

John Piper puts it this way: “God’s love is His willingness to do whatever is necessary—even suffering unimaginable pain—to bring us undeserving rebels the all-satisfying and everlasting joy of knowing Him.”

*How deep the Father’s love for us, How vast beyond all measure,  
That He should give His only Son, To make a wretch His treasure.*

This Easter, we remember that our freedom and salvation have come at a cost. A Father gave His one and only Son to pay the price that only He could pay.

*Why should I gain from His reward? I cannot give an answer;  
But this I know with all my heart — His wounds have paid my ransom.*

### Think About:

- Our loving and compassionate God not only understands our suffering, but He also chose to experience it Himself.
- Watch or sing along with: “How Deep the Father’s Love for Us” – words by Stuart Townend:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0CDqG5STPM>

MARCH 28

## Gethsemane (Thursday)

by Bob Grammer (2024)

**He went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. And he said, "Abba, Father! All things are possible for you. Take this cup away from me. Nevertheless, not what I will, but what you will." Then he came a third time and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The time has come. See, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Get up; let's go. See, my betrayer is near." (Mark 14:35-36.41-42)**

The New Testament only gives us conversations between Jesus and God on three occasions, one after Jesus' baptism, one after the Transfiguration, and one at Gethsemane. In two of these cases, however, God's comments are directed only tangentially to Jesus, being addressed directly to those around him. At Gethsemane Jesus' comments are to God.

Gethsemane is the gateway to the crucifixion and the resurrection. There Jesus will pray to the Father that He not be required to pass through the gate. In Jesus' prayer at Gethsemane He is dealing with His final temptation. He has known and has said several times that He will be killed. No doubt He is aware of the agonies of Roman crucifixions, the floggings, the nails, the mockery, the shame, and the eventual death. Jesus is human and as such does not wish to undergo that trial.

But Jesus has a special relationship with God ("my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased"). He knows that in order to overcome death, the crucifixion means separation from God, His Father. He has never faced this before. Thus, He prays at Gethsemane, "Let this cup pass from me." Three times with increasing urgency He prays, "Dad, Father! let me escape this trial." Each time He adds, "Nevertheless, not my will but thine be done." Just as at the wilderness, He does not give in to human temptation. (Matthew 4) And after each prayer God says, NOTHING.

Jesus of Nazareth prays to God: silence.

Jesus of the house and lineage of David beseeches God: silence.

Jesus the Son of God begs His Father: silence.

So, it has already begun. Jesus now has His answer. Knowing He is in the center of His Father's will, He tells His disciples to rise and go, for His captors are at hand.

### Think About:

- In our prayers of supplication, are we remembering to say "Not my will, but yours be done" (Luke 22:42)?
- Reflect on how your prayers are offered, do you seek God's will first even in difficult circumstances?

MARCH 29

## Relationships (Good Friday)

by Bob Bunn & Jimmy Hester (2018)

**When Jesus saw His mother and the disciple He loved standing there, He said to His mother, "Woman, here is your son." Then He said to the disciple, "Here is your mother." And from that hour the disciple took her into his home. (John 19:26-27)**

At a time when most of us would be focused on self-preservation, Jesus took time to focus on those closest to him. Jesus was a real man – flesh and blood, a mother's son – experiencing pain in dying. Jesus knew His death was not the end. Jesus would rise, but He would also return to heaven. In His absence, Jesus was concerned about His mother's future; He had a responsibility to make sure she would be cared for.

John's presence at the cross demonstrated his love for Jesus, so he was a natural choice to care for Mary. As a man, relationships were important to Jesus. He was committed to honoring those relationships until the end. He brought His mother Mary and the Apostle John together, providing for her after His death. What are your feelings for Mary as she stands at the foot of the cross witnessing the death of her Son?



### Think About:

- What does Jesus' concern for His family in such a stressful time say to you about relationships with family and close friends?
- What steps can we take today to provide for those who remain after we are gone?
- Are we sowing seeds now that will outlive us?



## Grieving Our Loss

by Bob Grammer (2014)

**For the creation eagerly waits with anticipation for God’s sons to be revealed ... in the hope that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage to decay into the glorious freedom of God’s children. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together with labor pains until now. (Romans 8:19,21-22)**

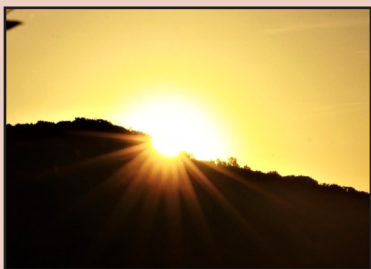
Over three days in 1883, massive and multiple volcanic explosions destroyed 10 square miles of the island of Krakatoa, approximately two-thirds of its land mass. The entire planet was covered with high levels of sulfuric acid in the air, the sky darkened for years afterward, and tsunamis occurred halfway around the earth. The physical state of the planet was changed dramatically. Now, over 140 years later, Krakatoa has begun to recover some of its original size.

The skies darkened at midday when Christ died on the cross (Luke 23:44). Matthew 27:51 reports that the earth shook and the rocks split when His death occurred. The physical state of the planet dramatically announced that the state of the spiritual universe was changing, never to revert to its original condition.

But the cost had to be paid, and the price was unimaginable. The heavens wept, the sun hid in shadows at the shame, and the hills and valley trembled at the sound of the hammer.

And then—and then, it was finished. Those who loved Him carried Him away.

### RISE by Bob Grammer



#### Sunrise

Comes every morning, announcing a new day. If we wish, and the weather cooperates, we can witness this daily, with its promise of a new day and all it may bring.



#### Earthrise

A photo taken from Apollo 8 of the earth rising above the moon, where the astronauts were in lunar orbit. The photo was shot just before the astronauts read from Genesis. This has been called “the most influential environmental photograph ever taken” because it “showed the world as a singular, fragile, oasis.”



#### Jesus Rise

No one saw this. And yet, it brought a new day, with eternal promise, no longer bound by the fragility of earthly life but rather animated by the Creator of the universe.

## MARCH 30

# The Tomb

by Alyssa & Steve Goins (2019)

**Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. (John 19:41)**



We're in awe of the stillness we have encountered in such places as among the crowds at the site of the USS Arizona or when we visit the Veterans cemetery where our fathers are buried. Jesus' followers probably sensed the same stillness as they approached His tomb early that third day.

The tomb was not far from where Jesus was crucified, so those sights and sounds were still fresh in their hearts and minds. His disciples had left families and careers to follow this king, but they had expected a very different outcome. What would they do now? Their hopes and dreams had been cruelly nailed to a tree.

When the women arrived at the tomb, they found the stone rolled away and His body gone. They were convinced someone had stolen the body. Then two men in dazzling clothes asked them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen!"

What a declaration of joy for all mankind to celebrate: the King of kings is not lying in a tomb! One day, God's children shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). What joy that we will see our loved ones again, too!

### Think About:

- Read stunning details from different writers of Easter morning: the angel's appearance (Matthew 28:2-4); the large stone rolled away (Mark 16:4); the neat linen burial face cloth (John 20:7); the angel's reminder that Jesus had said He would rise on the third day (Luke 24:5-8).
- Reflect on the hope of the empty tomb, the joy of changing a time of mourning into a time of rejoicing. That's what we're living – all of the time, we have the hope and joy of the knowledge of Jesus's resurrection! How can we focus on that more in the face of daily distractions?

MARCH 31

## The Resurrection (Easter Sunday)

by Jerry Brown (2019)

**Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. (Romans 6:3-5)**

Have you ever thought, really thought about the resurrection of Jesus? Can you imagine how Mary Magdalene and the disciples must have felt when they realized that Jesus had been raised from the dead and was actually alive?

Mary Magdalene's heart was broken when she found Jesus' tomb empty. But the angel gave her the good news that Jesus had risen from the dead. And then, she actually saw and talked with the risen Christ. From sadness to joy! From mourning to rejoicing! (Read John 20:1-18.)

Jesus was resurrected ... and so will you and I be along with all believers from all times and places! Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die!" (John 11:25-26) When we commit our lives to Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, we pass from death to life.

Charles Wesley's Easter hymn "Christ the Lord Is Risen Today" expresses the joy of our resurrection:

*Soar we now where Christ has led,  
Following our exalted Head.  
Made like Him, like Him we rise!  
Ours the cross, the grave, the skies!*

### Think About:

- Think about the different numbers of people at various times and places who interacted with Jesus before He ascended to heaven. So many people in groups small and large. So much witness to His resurrection.
- Listen to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9khJXoL9QGk>

## New Creation

But the Lamb of God had done what He was born to do. His devastated friends couldn't foresee that their story was just beginning. They could never have envisioned what was coming next! They could never have imagined that we, fellow believers 2000 years later, could read their stories and foresee the same ending. That we, like they, are new creations.

**Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.  
The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

*(2 Corinthians 5:17)*

*Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross is God's provision for our sin. It is through God's grace and mercy that we can have the gift of eternal life with Him. If you have never accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, or have questions about what being a "New Creation" means please let one of our pastors know. You are always welcome to come forward after a worship service and speak directly with a pastor, or email our senior pastor at [Thomas.West@NashvilleFirst.org](mailto:Thomas.West@NashvilleFirst.org). Our church also hosts a First Steps breakfast that gives you an opportunity to learn more about Nashville First and our beliefs. You can sign up for First Steps in the lobby after worship.*



*The 2024 Easter Devotional Guide is a gift to your family  
from Nashville First Baptist's Devotional Service Group:  
Judith King, Victoria Parker, Grace Wilkinson, and Helen Owens  
Other Contributors: Alan Lowe, Meredith Cummings, and Gary Eaton  
Layout: Katie Shull; Coordinator: Helen Owens  
Note: Unless otherwise noted, printed Scripture passages are taken  
from the English Standard Version (ESV) or Christian Standard Bible (CSB).*

**For more information about the ongoing services and ministries  
of Nashville First Baptist Church, visit [NashvilleFirst.org](http://NashvilleFirst.org)  
or call 615.664.6000.**