

Saturday: What's this?

READ Mark 2:18-19

*Why do John's disciples and the disciples of the Pharisees fast but Your disciples do not fast? And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast."*

I think every young boy hopes that one day he can grow up to be a treasure-hunter! We watch the movies – like “Raiders of the Lost Ark” – and see swashbuckling heroes braving all threats for that *one trinket of treasure*. And then to have it! Oh, but what if it is worth even more than you thought?

A surprising answer greeted the Lord's petitioner. “Why don't My disciples fast? Well, I am with them, of course they do not fast!” He is a treasure. *The* treasure. Possessing Him, owning Him, having an interest in Him – these are the goals of every human life. Or, they should be.

❖ Christian, do you know what you have in your soul?

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and covered up. Then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.”*

Arriving on a river of blood, on a boat of cross-wood, you have been given the greatest treasure of all: the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ!

O Christ, all Your ways of mercy tend to and end in my delight. You did weep, sorrow and suffer that I might rejoice. For my joy You have sent the Comforter, multiplied Your promises, shown me my future happiness and given me a living fountain! You are preparing joy for me, and me for joy. Let my heart leap towards the eternal Sabbath, where the work of redemption, holiness, preservation, and glorification is finished and perfected forever! In Christ's name, amen.

Christ Our Hope Church

## *Holy Week Family Devotional*

Easter, 2017

Holy Week, from Palm Sunday through Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and, finally, Easter Sunday, is the culmination of the redeeming and saving ministry of our Lord Jesus. What He began at the incarnation is brought to a victorious conclusion on Easter Sunday!

It is true too often that we stumble upon the Holy Season as we read our work, vacation and school calendars and then have that “Aha!” moment: Easter is coming! I know it’s been true for our family that we are *sure* we’d worship with more joy and zeal if we were just a little better prepared... The elders at Christ Our Hope believe that we *should* devote time in our personal devotions and family worship to preparing ourselves for Holy Week.

Along those lines, I have written this short devotional tool for you to use during Holy Week. It is simply designed to **remind** you of Gospel truths from our study of *Mark* and urge you to **make use** of them to excite faith and hope.

That way, on Easter morning, you may find new and fresh zeal and faith and love for Christ and for His church!

The format for this devotional is simple: a passage of Scripture from *Mark*, a short thought and a prayer from the prayer book, *The Valley of Vision*.

The elders of Christ Our Hope church pray this tool would remind you of the work of the Lord Jesus and prepare you to celebrate with Him in the glory of His resurrection – He is risen!

Heaven soon,  
Pastor Gabe

Friday: The battle belongs to the Lord

READ Mark 1:12-13

*The Spirit immediately drove Him out into the wilderness. And He was in the wilderness forty days being tempted by Satan. And He was with the wild animals and the angels were ministering to Him.*

We are a long way from any front lines of battle – we *think*. Many of us have friends or family in the armed forces and yet when it comes time for them to engage the enemy, they deploy to a distant land.

Spiritually, we mistake the front lines of battle for a faraway land. Yet Paul tells us our battles are in the unseen and invisible heavenlies (Ephesians 6:12) around us. We daily do battle wearing the armor of Christ using the weapons of the Spirit yet ours isn’t a win-or-lose situation, is it?

The singular decisive battle has already been fought and won! *Mark* breezes through what amounted to a real but straightforward victory of the Lord over the devil. The devil’s fate was sealed when the tomb was unsealed!

We don’t fight in vain, friend. If your battle is against your flesh, your enemy or against the wickedness in the world, the victory of Christ makes our victory just a matter of time. Give your heart to the battle for you won’t be disappointed in the end!

Giver of all graces, I look to You for strength to maintain them in me for it is hard to practice what I believe. Strengthen me against temptations. My heart is an unexhausted fountain of sin, a river of corruption flowing on in every pattern of behavior. Empower me against Satan’s darts and keep me sensible of my weakness! In Christ’s name, amen.

Thursday: Listen to the Word of the Lord

READ Mark 2:5, 11

*And when Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven....I say to you, 'Rise, pick up your bed and go home.'" And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all.*

Sometimes, God makes simple statements of fact. At other times, He also commands. Here, He does both. Which kind of statement from God do we like to hear: His statements or His command? Maybe it depends, right?

God's statements of outrageous blessing *should* be the easiest to hear; the ones we want to hear the most. How many times has God said something to us in His word that is simply breathtaking (like Romans 8:32) and we love to hear it but it doesn't have the effect of making us want to hear *more*?

Something in us resists believing the glorious truths of God. We are far more apt to believe the promises *don't* belong to us or that our sins have made us *forfeit* the grace of God or that He'd *never* bless us because we'd just waste it. The list goes on. And it is very sad that it does.

He forgives sin because He wants to and He can. He heals and restores because He loves to and He promises to. Christian, won't you listen and trust when He says this to you?

O Giving God, my heart is drawn out in thanksgiving to You, for Your amazing grace and condescension to me in the assistance of Your Spirit, for special help in prayer, for the sweetness of Christian service, for the thoughts of arriving in heaven, for always sending needful supply and for raising me to new life when I am like one dead. In Christ's name, amen.

Monday: God's favor has come to all who believe!

READ Mark 1:9-11

*In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately He saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on Him like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son; with You I am well-pleased."*

That was an amazing day! Can you imagine the electricity of the moment? John knows Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29). Jesus bows before him to receive the baptism – in the sins of His people – and, as He arises the heavens tear open and the Spirit and the Father both praise and honor our Lord.

Why? Because the Favor of heaven has come to earth and the Blessing of heaven was about to spread into all the corners of mankind. You and I – Gentiles by birth, excluded from the blessings of Israel – are **favored** by God with salvation by His Son. Can you believe that?

This is the season of His favor on all who believe! Is that you? Rejoice and be glad! Not you? Then, friend, do not delay, reach out your hand to God and let Him fill it with salvation blessing!

My God, I feel it is heaven to please You, and to be what You would have me be. O that I were holy as You are holy, pure as Christ is pure, perfect as Your Spirit is perfect! What shall I do to glorify and worship this best of Beings? O that I would consecrate my soul and body to His service without restraint forever! O that I could give myself up to Him so as never more to attempt to be my own or have any will or affections that are not perfectly conformed to His will and His love. Give me a heart full of divine heavenly love. In Christ's name, amen.

Tuesday: What a great time!

READ Mark 1:14-15

*Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."*

We are all *too* concerned about things around us: the politics, the economics, the internet, the schools, the teams and our retirements.

But, have you considered that you *also* live in the time when the kingdom of God whose glory was hidden from men for ages (Ephesians 3:9) has appeared? You hear the good news of Christ's kingdom from His own Spirit in His own word – none have ever had that privilege before!

You have access to the oracles and instructions of the Creator of the universe! His own Spirit is relentlessly working to bury His good reign and rule in your heart in ways never before known.

I know: you're thinking, "This stuff has been around a long time." True. But *you* haven't. And, you – by God's grace – jumped into the everlasting stream of the kingdom! Are you kidding me! It is the time of the good news of Jesus Christ for all who believe.

Father, You have revealed Yourself as the fullness of goodness, with strength enough to comfort me, wisdom enough to guide me, mercy enough to awaken me, love enough to satisfy me. You have shown me that because You are mine, I can live by Your life, be strong by Your strength, be guided by Your wisdom and so I can lift my thoughts and heart to You. Help me to know that he who hopes for nothing but You, hopes truly, and that I must place all my happiness in holiness if I hope to be filled with all grace. In Christ's name, amen.

Wednesday: What a great team!

READ Mark 1:16-17, 2:13-14

*Passing alongside the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew....And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me and I will make you into fishers of men" ...And as Jesus passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting in the tax booth and He said to him, "Follow Me."*

One day, men and women from all nations and tribes and tongues will be together and their differences will radiate into an amazing picture. Maybe in heaven, when we see this sight, we'd say, "Why didn't I see this on the earth?"

Why, indeed. Our differences now seem to have hidden strength of their own to solidify and harden their hold on our hearts. Jesus breaks the back of our differences when He saves Jew and Gentile alike (see Ephesians 2:14) and He makes us One.

When I join with another believer in friendship or ministry and his differences arise, at first, I'm concerned. "I don't know how this will go," I think. Right? Differences don't draw us close naturally. But then, in the hands of the Holy Spirit, I've seen those differences multiply ministry and joy. And, in the end, I wonder what I feared. Christ's church is the A-Team He recruited and it is a great team!

O Lord Jesus, let not my pride swell my heart. My nature is the mire beneath my feet, the dust to which I will return. Low as I am as a creature, I am lower as a sinner. I have trampled Your law times without number. Help me to see myself in Your sight, then pride must wither, decay, die, perish and fall to ruin. Humble my heart before You and replenish it with Your choicest gifts. Make me the lowest of the lowly that my spiritual riches may exceedingly abound, in Christ's name, amen.